Hafa Adai!

Jordan Paradise drops festive rap EP. PAGE 2
Tourism body expects 'slight' rise in visitor arrivals in FY '25. PAGE 4

7 DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS

$1

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THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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FOR SMUGGLING OVER $150K WORTH OF METH

Man faces 51 months in jail

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

A man who previously pleaded guilty to attempted possession of a controlled substance with the intent to distribute for attempting to smuggle over $150,000 worth of methamphetamine into the CNMI through a portable speaker now faces a possible 51-month sentence.

See MAN on Page 4

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Delegate-elect Kimberlyn King-Hinds alongside Commonwealth Utilities Corp. chief financial officer Betty Terlaje, CUC executive director Kevin Watson, and CUC board of directors chair Janice Tenorio.

King-Hinds appointed to House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

Delegate-elect Kimberlyn King-Hinds has been appointed to the influential House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for the upcoming congressional term.

The announcement was made following a vote by the Republican Steering Committee, with input from T&I chair Sam Graves (R-MO). King-Hinds joins a slate of new Republican members who will serve on the committee, tasked with overseeing key federal

See KING-HINDS on Page 4

Latte Quarry at As Nieves part of 19 new National Historic Landmarks

MARK RABAGO

The Latte Quarry at As Nieves is a quarry for latte—structural stone shafts and capstones integral to Chamorro architecture.

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

The Latte Quarry at As Nieves on Rota is one of 19 new National Historic Landmarks recently designated by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland said the 19 new NHLs reflects the importance of the sites in sharing America's diverse history.

As its name already suggests, the Latte Quarry at As Nieves is a quarry for

See LATTE on Page 4

Palacios

Palacios signs bill to fund Legislative Bureau

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios has signed into law a bill that appropriates over $200,000 to the Legislative Bureau to address its funding crisis.

Last, week, Palacios signed House Local Bill 23-67 and is now Saipan Local Law 23-22.

Last month, the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation passed House Local Bill 23-67 which essentially appropriate funds from Saipan Local Laws 20-04 to 20-26 to the Legislative

See PALACIOS on Page 4

INSIDE

LOCAL

School children were joined by public education and government leaders and community members in inaugurating last Monday the newly built federally funded Garapan Elementary School cafeteria.

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WORLD

Ukraine's military intelligence agency and the Pentagon said Monday that some North Korean troops have been killed during combat against Ukrainian forces in Russia's Kursk border region.

PAGE 10

LIFE & STYLE

For the press heading into a second Trump administration, there's a balancing act between being prepared and being fearful.

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Local

Jordan Paradise drops festive rap EP

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
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CORRESPONDENT

Resident artist and rapper Jordan Ruiz is excited to share his twist to holiday music with the drop of his new Christmas EP a "Paradise Christmas."

In an interview with Ruiz, known to his fans as Jordan Paradise, he explained the two-track collection, is a unique blend of classic Christmas cheer and contemporary rap vibes.

The songs released yesterday and Ruiz told *Saipan Tribune* that the idea for the EP was born while he was preparing to participate in Bridge Capital's CNMI Got Talent this year. The holiday-themed competition sparked his creative process.

"I didn't want to just perform standard Christmas songs," Ruiz shared in an interview. "So, I teamed up with my producer, and we decided to remix public domain classics like 'Jingle Bells,' turning them into something new."

The young artist shared that his vision was to create a holiday rap experience that infused hip-hop beats, original lyrics, and yet still bring the feelings of childhood Christmas memories. Ruiz describes the process of creating the EP as a labor of love.

"I wanted to replicate the feelings of Christmas in a way that young kids could connect with and enjoy," he said. "As a kid, I remember lying in bed, thinking I could hear 'Jingle Bells' in the sky, and that excitement inspired a lot of the lyrics." He shared that he wanted to give a new generation vibe to traditional Christmas music that hopefully others will enjoy.

Resident artist and rapper Jordan Ruiz, known to his fans as Jordan Paradise, has dropped a new Christmas EP aptly titled "Paradise Christmas."

CHRYSTAL MARINO

While the EP focuses on the holidays, Ruiz hinted at his intention to incorporate more island influences into future projects. "This one's all about Christmas—presents, traditions, and of course, Jesus—but I'm definitely planning to bring more island flair next time," he said.

Along with the EP, Ruiz was excited to release his new merch line. Inspired by the themes of his music, the first design echoes his message of positivity.

"It's just the beginning," he said, expressing plans to expand the line in the coming year. When asked about how the music was received during the launch, he said he's focusing more on marketing to his support base

"It's been slow but steady as far as the launch, especially since I'm focusing on marketing it to my biggest supporters first. It's more of a trial run quite honestly, but it is definitely still a special, shorter body of work to share. It also will help set the standard, [one that I can] keep raising as I transition into music being less of a hobby and more of a career/business."

Ruiz's gratitude for his journey was evident throughout the interview, as he credited his family, fans, and loved ones, especially his girlfriend, as well as his best friend Simon for their unwavering support.

"My family cultivated my musical aspirations when I was younger," he said. "And my fans keep pushing me further than I ever imagined." He even gave a nod to his furry friends, saying, "I love dogs, so my animals at home get some love too!"

When asked for his holiday message to the community, Ruiz emphasized kindness and generosity. "Spread joy and peace," he urged. "You never know who might need it this time of year."

Those eager to hear Ruiz's festive spin on holiday classics can look for the song on Instagram. The EP will be available on all streaming platforms shortly after its initial release.

This Christmas, Ruiz invites listeners to rediscover the magic of the season—rapped out and reimagined his way.

aetna

Attention CNMI government employees, retirees and surviving spouses

It's Open Enrollment time

Last day to enroll is today, Wednesday December 18

Our goal is to provide you with access to the highest levels of care and support possible through our:

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- Comprehensive global resources and access to care
- 24/7 Member Service Support

Attention all members: Please review available plan options and premium deductions beginning January 1, 2025. If you're not making any changes to your enrolled plan, you don't need to submit an enrollment form.

Want to enroll, change your plan or update dependents? If you're satisfied with your current plan and coverage, you DO NOT need to submit an enrollment form.

Deliver your form and any required documentation:

- **Active employees:** to your respective Agency or Department of Human Resources
- **Retirees and surviving spouses:** to Department of Finance, GHLI

Your health and safety are paramount.

- Visit our website listed below to view your Open Enrollment material and enrollment/change of status form to help you choose the best plan for you and your loved ones
- Open Enrollment support is available by phone and in-person

Websites to help you choose a plan:

- Aetna International: **go.aetna.com/cnmi-ghli**
- CNMI Dept of Finance: **www.finance.gov.mp**

Have questions? Call us:

- For Open Enrollment inquiries, contact Pacifica locally at: **670-234-6267** Monday – Friday, 8 AM–5 PM
- For non-OE related inquiries, contact our Member Service Center 24/7 at: **800-231-7729**

Weekly OE presentation will be held at the Joeten Kiyu Public Library and government agencies, as arranged please call us for details.

Open enrollment runs from November 18 through December 18, 2024.

Plans and programs are underwritten or administered by Aetna Life & Casualty (Bermuda) Ltd. or Aetna Life Insurance Company (Aetna).

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Tourism body expects 'slight' rise in visitor arrivals in FY '25

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

The Marianas Visitors Authority admitted that the CNMI as a destination took a beating in fiscal year 2024, but is expecting a slight improvement in the coming fical year.

"We are projecting a slight increase in overall arrivals for fiscal year 2025 compared to fiscal year 2024 but the increase is still paltry compared to the number of arrivals we had when we had direct flights from mainland China before COVID-19," said MVA managing director Christopher A. Concepcion.

As for the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands' comment that the CNMI's tourism industry is in dire straits, the MVA chief said "the numbers speak for themselves."

Meanwhile, arrivals to the Northern Marianas decreased 23% to 12,254 visitors in November 2024, compared to 15,815 visitors received in November 2023.

Concepcion attributed this dip to several factors, namely Jeju Air's temporary suspension of one of their daily flights due to aircraft maintenance and crew issues.

However, he said they low-budget South Korean carrier has since resumed twice daily flights from Seoul, and will launch twice weekly from Busan next week.

"We expect December numbers to be better. T'way Air still operates daily flights from Seoul, Hong Kong Airlines operates twice weekly from Hong Kong, and United Airlines operates three weekly flights from Tokyo," he said.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

LATTE

From page 1

latte—structural stone shafts and capstones integral to Chamorro architecture. Latte structures are key to ancient and modern Chamorro architecture. Latte provided the foundation for ancient Chamorro homes and community spaces. The latte located at the As Nieves quarry remain in-situ, making the site particularly unique.

In its successful nomination as part of the 19 newest NHLs, the Latte Quarry at As Nieves is described as exceptional architectural, archeological, and cultural resource in the Mariana Islands. It has been identified as the location of the largest and most well-defined latte elements (structural stone shafts and capstones) that remain in place in or near their quarry pits. The site is easily the most recognizable quarry in the Marianas, renowned for the size and condition of its elements.

The Latte Quarry at As Nieves is nationally significant as a National Historic Landmark as it's an outstanding example of latte elements and quarries in the Marianas, exhibiting uniquely massive elements that are the largest recorded to date. Latte sets are the archetypal archeological remains representing the Latte Period of the Mariana archipelago. A latte set consists of two parallel rows of pillars formed by placing semi-hemispherical capstones on top of upright shafts, ranging in size from six to fourteen pillars (i.e., three to seven pairs) and from less than 50 cm to 5 m in height. Latte sets likely formed the foundation for a thatched, wood superstructure used for a variety of residential activities or as community men's houses, canoe storage, or shelters for outdoor activities like food preparation.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

CEDA
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PUBLIC NOTICE
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2024

PURSUANT TO PUBLIC LAW 8-41, THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE COMMONWEALTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (CEDA) THRU ITS CHAIRMAN, HEREBY INFORMS THE GENERAL PUBLIC THAT THE CEDA BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL HOLD A SPECIAL MEETING ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2024 AT 9:30 AM. THE MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE CEDA CONFERENCE ROOM, FIRST FLOOR, CEDA BUILDING, OLEAI SAIPAN. THE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING IS AS FOLLOWS:

AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
A. Call to Order
B. Roll Call
C. Adoption of Agenda
II. PUBLIC COMMENTS
III. QUALIFYING CERTIFICATE (QC) PROGRAM (Board Action)
A. Review and Deliberation of the application for a QC by J&P Holdings CNMI LLC
IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION
V. ADJOURNMENT

All interested persons are welcome to attend and to submit written or oral testimony on the above agenda items. (Note: Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 13(a)(7) and Section 13(c), the Board may vote to meet in executive session.)

/s/
DANA A. CALVO
Acting Chairperson

PALACIOS

From page 1

Bureau who previously expressed that they have been crippled by budget constraints.

Specifically, from Saipan Local Law 20-04, the delegation appropriated $59,491.61 to the Legislative Bureau while $150,000 was appropriated to the bureau from Saipan Local Law 20-26.

The legislation passed the delegation by unanimous vote.

According to the delegation, the funds appropriated is excess funds from previous appropriations by the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation to fund a generator system for the legislative building.

Previously, the NMI Legislative Bureau announced that it would be terminating essential services following a letter from the CNMI administration informing the bureau that they will no longer be receiving the remaining $1.8 million in American Rescue Plan Act monies allocated by the previous administrator.

Back in October, Palacios and Finance Secretary Tracy Norita wrote to Legislative Bureau director Perry P. Tenorio stating that there was no sufficient ARPA funds left for the Legislature.

During the previous administration, former governor Ralph DLG Torres allocated $3.5 million to the Legislative Bureau but about $1.8 million had yet to be disbursed.

"We regret to inform you that we have reviewed the ARPA Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund spending and determined that there are not sufficient funds available to pay available budget amounts not already disbursed on behalf of the CNMI Legislature," said the letter.

Tenorio, in a letter to the Legislature, stated that because they no longer have access to these ARPA funds, they will have to terminate essential services.

"Following the governor and the Department of Finance secretary's correspondence informing us that the bureau will no longer have access to the remaining ARPA Fund balance of $1.8 million, we are compelled to take immediate actions to prevent the bureau from incurring unfunded liabilities. The situation is of significant concern. Effective immediately, aside from personnel and utilities, all recurring monthly services will be discontinued. This will have a critical impact on the bureau's operational capacity, particularly in the area of communications infrastructure," said Tenorio.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

KING-HINDS

From page 1

policies on transportation systems, infrastructure development, maritime issues, and economic resilience-areas that are critical to the CNMI's growth and sustainability.

"I am honored to have been selected to serve on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee," King-Hinds stated. "This committee plays a vital role in shaping policies that directly impact the CNMI, from establishing reliable and affordable transportation networks to addressing infrastructure needs and strengthening our economy that is so reliant on access to the world. The transportation challenges of our islands have been limiting opportunities for our people, and the soaring costs for basic utility services are top of mind for nearly all our residents. I look forward to taking this opportunity to work with my colleagues and ensure that the CNMI's unique challenges and opportunities are part of the national conversation and see results for our people."

King-Hinds emphasized the importance of her appointment in addressing the CNMI's immediate infrastructure needs, particularly regarding ports, utilities, and transportation systems, which are essential for economic development, community well-being, public safety, and disaster preparedness.

Earlier today, as part of her ongoing listening tour with government agencies, King-Hinds met with officials from the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.to discuss the CNMI's pressing infrastructure needs. The meeting focused on priorities for power generation, water, and wastewater services-critical areas that impact both economic growth and residents' quality of life. "Our labor force, businesses, and families all rely on reliable and affordable utilities," King-Hinds said. "The discussions today with CUC officials reaffirmed the need for immediate action and targeted investments to address these challenges."

"Our inclusion on this committee provides the CNMI with a stronger platform to advocate for the CNMI's infrastructure priorities," King-Hinds continued. "From expanding investments in our ports to improving resilience against natural disasters and securing opportunities to help families with the rising costs of utilities, I am excited to get started on ensuring the needs of our islands are understood and met."

The T&I Committee oversees matters related to federal transportation systems, water infrastructure, maritime commerce, and economic development-making it a key driver of initiatives to improve connectivity, strengthen trade, and support communities like the CNMI.

King-Hinds joins other newly appointed members, including representatives-elect Tom Barrett (R-MI), Nick Begich (R-AK), Brad Knott (R-NC), Addison McDowell (R-NC), Jefferson Shreve (R-IN), Rob Bresnahan (R-PA), Jeff Hurd (R-CO), and Dave Taylor (R-OH).

King-Hinds concluded, "This appointment reflects the recognition of the CNMI's importance to national infrastructure conversations and reaffirms my commitment to delivering results for our people. I am excited to begin this work and to amplify the CNMI's voice in Washington, D.C." ***(PR)***

MAN

From page 1

Xuguang Li, a man who pleaded guilty to attempted possession of a controlled substance with the intent to distribute for attempting to smuggle over $150,000 worth of methamphetamine into the CNMI through a portable speaker, is up for sentencing today.

Li's defense counsel, Bruce Berline, has proposed a sentence of 51 months claiming his client was merely "acting as a mule" and was tasked to pick up a package containing meth pursuant to promises of money.

"Defendant Li has been here on Saipan since 2008. Unfortunately, for a substantial period of time he has been here, Li has struggled to survive. His struggles have resulted in making bad decisions and made him an easy target for what appears to be a sophisticated dealer and distributor of methamphetamine to convince him, with an empty promise of money, to act a mule in picking up a package containing methamphetamine. Here, because Li's involvement in this matter was limited to him picking up a package at the UPS store located on Saipan that contained methamphetamine, he is considered a minimal participant in this matter. Li's crime did not involve actual, or threats of, violence, serious injuries, firearms, or dangerous weapons. In fact, Li would have qualified for a Zero-Point Offender under U.S.S.G. §4C1.1(a) had he been a first-time offender. Finally, Mr. Li has fully accepted responsibility for his actions. Li asks this dourt to sentence him to a term of 51 months in prison and waive any fine as he is indigent," said Berline.

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona is set to hear these proposals today and issue a judgment.

According to the criminal complaint against Li, on July 5, 2024, while conducting a routine inspection of consolidated cargo for United Parcel Service at Micronesian Air Cargo Services at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, CNMI Customs officers inspected a brown box addressed to Li Xuguang from Ruki Zhen of Monterey Park, California.

Inside were three Beauty Yoyo brand short pants and one Burgani brand portable speaker. When the box was subjected to x-ray examination at the airport, an anomaly was detected within the speaker.

Customs officers opened the speaker and observed that it was filled with aluminum foil. The box was then brought to the Customs Contraband Enforcement Team office for further inspection. Customs officers removed six aluminum foil wrappings, which, after being unwrapped, revealed six clear plastic packets containing a crystal-like substance. Field tests performed on the substances indicated the presence of methamphetamine.

The total weight of the foil, clear plastic packets, and the crystal-like substances was approximately 516.7 gross grams.

According to CNMI Customs & Biosecurity, the total street value of the intercepted methamphetamine was $155,000.

Chamber to host Business Person of the Year on Jan. 25

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce is excited to announce the Chamber's much-anticipated signature event of the Year, the Annual Business Person of the Year & Board Installation Gala, set to take place on Saturday, Jan. 25, 2025, at Hibiscus Hall, Crowne Plaza.

This memorable event not only marks a celebration of business excellence but also serves as a platform for the installation of the newly elected and returning board of directors. The evening promises a blend of elegance and significance as the Chamber acknowledges outstanding contributions to the local business community.

The gala will feature the presentation of awards, including the 2024 Chamber Member of the Year, 2024 Non-Profit of the Year, 2024 Small Business of the Year, and the three newly added categories, 2024 Trail Blazing Start-up, 2024 Agency Star, and the 2024 Emerging Leader Star. These accolades recognize businesses and organizations that have demonstrated exceptional dedication, innovation, and community impact throughout the year.

» Board Installation Gala also on that date

A highlight of the evening will be the much-anticipated announcement of the 2024 Business Person of the Year, a recognition granted to an individual who has demonstrated exceptional leadership and influence within the business community.

Tickets for this event are priced at $125 per person, which promises attendees a night of elegance, recognition, and networking. For groups, tables can be reserved at $1,100, accommodating eight guests with a complimentary premium bottle of wine.

To secure your spot at this premier event, RSVP via this link: https://tinyurl.com/SCC2024BPOY or contact our office at (670) 234-7150 or email us at contactus@saipanchamber.org.

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce is a dynamic organization dedicated to promoting and enhancing the business environment on Saipan. Through networking, advocacy, and community engagement, the Chamber strives to foster a vibrant and sustainable business community. ***(PR)***

Magnitude 7.3 earthquake hits Vanuatu

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP)—A magnitude 7.3 earthquake struck Tuesday just off the coast of Vanuatu in the South Pacific Ocean, the USGS said.

The quake occurred at a depth of 57 kilometers (35 miles) and was centered 30 kilometers (10 miles) west of Port Vila, the largest city in the island nation. The jolt was followed by a magnitude 5.5 aftershock near the same location.

It was not immediately clear whether it caused any damage, but Vanuatu government websites were offline in the aftermath of the quake and phone numbers for the police and other public agencies did not connect.

The USGS warned of tsunami waves for some coasts on Vanuatu, a group of 80 islands that is home to about 330,000 people. Waves could reach 0.3 meters to 1 meter (1 to 3 feet) above the tide level, the agency said.

Some islands in the low-lying atoll nation are 3 feet above sea level.

The USGS also warned of tsunami waves registering less than 0.3 meters (1 foot) above the tide level for a number of nearby Pacific islands including Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Solomon Islands.

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

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JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT # 01-2025

Opening date: December 16, 2024 **Closing date: January 03, 2025**

Location:	**SAIPAN**	**SALARY**
Position(s):	(1) AOA Controller-I	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr. or $18,362.70/annum)
	(1) General Maintenance-I	PL 3/1 ($8.01/hr. or $16,655.51/annum)
Location:	**TINIAN**	**SALARY**
Position(s):	(1) AOA Controller/Ground Maintenance-I	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr. or $18,362.70/annum)
	(1) General Maintenance-II	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr. or $18,362.70/annum)
	(1) Tariff Technician-I	PL 4/1 ($8.41/hr. or $17,488.29/annum)
Location:	**ROTA**	**SALARY**
Position(s):	(1) Ports Police/ARFF Trainee	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr.)
	(1) General Maintenance-II	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr. or $18,362.70/annum)

Employment Application must be accompanied with a copy of all required diploma/certificates and/or official sealed transcripts, original copy of recent police record not more than six (6) months old, original copy of U.S. Department of Defense Form DD214 for retired members or veterans of our Armed Forces, and other documents as required for the position. Public Law 11-70 requires that all male applicants age 18 to 25 years old must submit documentation evidencing his registration with the Federal Selective Service System. All applications and required documents must be submitted to the ***CPA Administration Office, 2nd Floor Arrival Building, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport or CPA Administration Office, Tinian International Airport, or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport.*** Failure to provide any of the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. Certain vacancies may require written and/or physical test. Selected applicants will be subjected to pre-employment drug screening, 10-year Criminal History Record Check and 49 CFR Part 1542.209(d) Requirements. CPA reserves the right to waive or implement other qualifications to meet its needs. The deadline for submission of applications and required documents to the CPA Administration Office (Saipan) or at the Tinian International Airport or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport is no later than **5:00 P.M. on Friday, January 03, 2025.**

Detailed information on qualifications and position descriptions for the above positions may be picked up along with the application form from Monday-Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., except on holidays and austerity, at the CPA Administration Office (2nd Floor) of the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, Arrival Terminal or CPA Admin, Office at the Tinian International Airport or at the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport. For additional information, please contact the CPA Human Resources Office by email at lorna.robert@cnmiports.com and hrspecialist@cnmiports.com or by phone at (670)237-6500.

CPA is an Equal Opportunity Employer and CPA hires those who are legally entitled to employment in the CNMI.

FREDERICK A. PANGELINAN
Acting Executive Director

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-25-002

KAGMAN WATER TANK REPLACEMENT AND BOOSTER PUMP STATION UPGRADE

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the construction of the Kagman Water Tank Replacement and Booster Pump Station Upgrade in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists of demolition of the existing water tank, booster pumps, yard piping, and all other appurtenances; construction of a new 70,000-gallon cast-in-place circular concrete water tank; removal of the temporary modular tank; construction of new generator building; installation of new generator equipment, flow meter stations, triplex pitless booster pump system, telemetry and controls; reconnection of existing waterlines; electrical works; site improvements; and other related work. The work shall be done in accordance with the project plans and specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system.

This project is funded by a grant from the US Public Law 117-2 American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

CUC requires the Project to be completed in **four hundred twenty (420) calendar days** from date of award of contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **December 5, 2024 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "**CUC-IFB-25-002, Kagman Water Tank Replacement and Booster Pump Station Upgrade**", to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on December 27, 2024**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A *Bid Guarantee* of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States, Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidder. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 12, 2024** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email at manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Ms. Alley Reyes, Engineer, Water & Wastewater – via email at alley.reyes@cucgov-.org and Ms. Marcela Tenorio, Procurement & Supply, Administrative Technichian Senior – via email at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

KEVIN O. WATSON
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
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The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Suspected killer Mangione is not a hero—stop treating him as one

Luigi Mangione, the accused killer of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson, is being hailed by many as a hero.

There's something profoundly wrong with that.

From the time of Thompson's murder on a Manhattan street caught in surveillance camera photos, to snippets of Mangione's alleged movements while on the run, online praise for Mangione has run neck and neck with vitriol for health insurers.

Google removed a flood of negative McDonald's reviews after a fast-food employee in an Altoona, Pa. location reported Mangione to police and he was arrested. "More like Narcdonalds…" wrote one user.

As Newsweek reported, an online fundraiser created to help Mangione with his legal fees (with a goal of $200,000) has surpassed $10,000. More than 380 donors have thus far contributed.

One anonymous $20 giver wrote, "Thank you for your service sir I hope this is only the beginning." Another $20 patron echoed, "Thank you."

Thank you for what? Leaving Thompson's two sons without a father? How exactly will that change how health care is managed in this country?

Mangione appears to have been inspired by the Unabomber, according to an NYPD intel analysis report obtained by ABC News. The report warned that like Ted Kaczynski—whose 17-year bombing campaign killed three and injured 23 people—Mangione may become a "martyr" who inspires "a wide range of extremists" to act.

That's the problem with holding up murderous vigilantes as heroes, they inspire other people willing to kill to draw attention to their beliefs. Would anti-fossil fuel activists be justified in executing oil company executives or the owners of local gas stations? Of course not, but zealots would beg to differ.

How is Mangione different from the disgruntled employee who opens fire at a former workplace, or the random shooter with a grudge against society who decides to take out his anger on mall patrons?

The fawning online reception for Mangione is a chilling indication of a moral nadir in this country.

In handwritten pages Mangione had on him, he indicated "he's frustrated with the health care system in the United States," NYPD Chief of Detective Joe Kenny told ABC News' "Good Morning America."

Who isn't?

Health care and the health care insurance industry is riddled with bad practices, from excessive claim denials to actions such as Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield's recent short-lived

See KILLER on Page 7

Throw the book at 'em

By MARTIN SCHRAM
Tribune News Service

Martin Schram, an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service, is a veteran Washington journalist, author and TV documentary executive.

What Donald Trump wants most, once he becomes President 2.0, is to throw the book at all his perceived enemies who were—and may still be—embedded in the bowels of Official Washington.

So, no wonder Trump rushed to choose as his designated-thrower and new FBI director the man who wrote the book that names the names of Trump's perceived enemies. He is Kash Patel. His book is: "Government Gangsters: The Deep State, the Truth, and The Battle for our Democracy."

And at the very top, above the title, the cover of the 2023 paperback edition prominently displays one reviewer's glowing blurb: "A brilliant roadmap highlighting every corrupt actor, to ultimately return our agencies and departments to work for the American People… we will use this blueprint to help us take back the White House and remove these Gangsters from all of Government."—President Donald J. Trump."

When Trump recently named the little-known, lower-level former prosecutor and government national security aide as his next FBI director, he wasn't worried that you'd probably never even heard of Kash Patel. Trump figures you'll know Kash's made-for-Hollywood name—and recognize his made-for-podcast news presence—faster than you can say "J. Edgar!"

Perhaps the one thing that got Patel his new job nomination was, of all things, his book's Appendix B, titled: "Members of the Executive Branch Deep State." It is a list of 60 Washington names. But to simply say that—and nothing more—would be like saying the names enshrined in Cooperstown's Hall of Fame is a just list of baseball guys. There are the contemporary famous Democrats: Joe Biden, Hillary Clinton, Kamala Harris.

Included are also famous Republicans—staunch right-wingers who dared to speak truth to Grand Old Party power: Trump's former attorney general Bill Barr, national security adviser John Bolton, and many Trump era cabinet members, generals and intelligence chiefs.

And Patel's list of 60 Deep Staters includes former FBI directors: James Comey, Robert Mueller, and incumbent director Christopher Wray, who was supposed to serve for three more years. Except Trump pressured him into resigning by publicly acting as if he already had—and declaring Patel was his choice for FBI director.

Patel's Appendix B list begins with one paragraph that may have been his new job slam-dunk: "This list only includes current and former Executive Branch officials and is not exhaustive. It does not, for example, include other corrupt actors of the first order such as Congressmen (now Senator) Adam Schiff, and Eric Swalwell… the entire fake news mafia press corps, etc."

Imagine Trump's reaction the moment someone showed him Patel's line about "the entire fake news mafia press corps." For President 2.0, it might have instantly become the book's climactic moment.

And speaking of that: This week, the Justice Department's inspector general issued a report critical of Trump administration "inappropriate" surreptitious tactics to subpoena phone and email communications of journalists and members of Congress and congressional staff officials between 2017 and 2020.

Trump officials sought to halt efforts of journalists to report information about possible contacts between Trump officials and Russians during the 2016 presidential campaign. The inspector general concluded that the Trump officials' actions created "at a minimum, the appearance of inappropriate interference by the executive branch in legitimate oversight activity by the legislative branch."

The DOJ inspector general concluded that Trump administration officials seized records involving two Democratic lawmakers and 43 congressional staff members—21 who worked for Democrats, 20 who worked for Republicans, and two who worked for nonpartisan offices.

Patel was one of the congressional staff members whose records Trump officials seized, according to the IG's report. Patel was a staff member of the House Intelligence Committee at the time. Patel discovered what was happening not through top secret investigative efforts, but because Google informed him his records had been subpoenaed. So, the author of "Government Gangsters" sued top officials of Trump's Justice Department—including FBI Director Wray.

"Who watches the watchmen?" Patel's lawsuit began. "In our post-PATRIOT Act world, where the U.S. Government has been repeatedly exposed for spying on its own people, and the awesome and chilling power of our federal law enforcement agencies has been weaponized against the American people, there is no more important question."

The Trump administration subpoena actions that Patel had sued to stop was halted in 2021—by Biden's Attorney General Merrick Garland, whose spokesperson said the Justice Department will no longer "seek compulsory legal process in leak investigations to obtain source information from members of the news media doing their jobs."

The 21st name in Patel's alphabetical list of "Members of the Executive Branch Deep State" includes: "Garland, Merrick—Attorney General under President Biden."

And so it goes. The more things seem to change in Washington, the more Washington seems the same.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Why Trump can't just end birthright citizenship

By BARBARA MCQUADE
Bloomberg Opinion

Barbara McQuade is a professor at the University of Michigan Law school, a former U.S. attorney and author of Attack from Within: How Disinformation Is Sabotaging America.

Donald Trump knows that in politics, sometimes you can win by losing.

After making immigration reform a focus of his campaign, Trump, in an interview on NBC's "Meet the Press," promised to end birthright citizenship, calling the concept "ridiculous." Perhaps the president-elect disfavors citizenship for people born in the U.S. as a matter of policy, but eliminating a legal right guaranteed by the Constitution is a tall order. Even so, it may be that Trump believes that an aggressive stance on immigration is what matters most.

The main obstacle Trump faces is the language of the Constitution. Section 1 of the 14th Amendment states: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside."

Trump could challenge that provision in several ways—all likely to fail. First, he could call for a constitutional amendment to change the law. Article V of the Constitution provides for amendment when proposed by two-thirds of both houses of Congress or two-thirds of all states and then ratified by three-fourths. There is a reason our Constitution has been amended only 27 times in our nation's history. The process was designed to be difficult to protect stability in our governance. In today's deeply polarized times, the likelihood of a constitutional amendment on immigration seems virtually impossible.

Second, Trump could seek to change the law by legislation. One former Trump administration official has proposed a federal statute stating that children of non-citizens are not "subject to the jurisdiction" of the U.S. That language would remove them from the protection of the 14th Amendment's Birthright Clause.

This route, too, would likely go nowhere. In addition to the difficulty of passing legislation when the Senate's thin GOP majority can be blocked by filibuster, such a statute is also poor policy because it would open the door to numerous other problems. Being subject to the jurisdiction of the U.S. means that a person can be brought into court for violating its laws. Placing someone outside the jurisdiction of the U.S. is a privilege we bestow on diplomats to protect them from courts. Immigration hawks would not want to put the children of non-citizens beyond the reach of the judicial system.

That leaves Trump's best option as an executive order directing federal agencies to disregard the 14th Amendment. Of course, such an order would violate Trump's oath to support and defend the Constitution, but we have been here before. By denying passports, Social Security numbers, and other citizenship rights, the administration would deliberately invite lawsuits to challenge its conduct. Those lawsuits would likely work their way up to the Supreme Court, where the Trump administration would argue that the Birthright Clause excludes the children of non-citizens in the U.S. unlawfully. But this strategy, too, is likely to fail.

Of course, we have seen legal precedent overturned in recent years on topics ranging from abortion to affirmative action to the authority of administrative agencies. However, unlike those issues, birthright citizenship is a right explicitly outlined in the language of the Constitution, making it more difficult for the Supreme Court's textualists to reject it. The provision was adopted following the Civil War to ensure the citizenship of formerly enslaved African Americans. A federal statute confers citizenship using the same language.

There is also legal precedent. In 1898, the Supreme Court decided that the provision applied to the children of non-citizens in United States v. Wong Kim Ark. In that case, a man born in California to Chinese immigrants left the country. While he was away, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which prohibited him from re-entering. The Court held that his birth on U.S. soil conferred citizenship and permitted his return.

Some scholars have argued that Wong Kim Ark is limited to the children of immigrants living in the country lawfully and does not extend to undocumented immigrants. That argument seems to be refuted by the language of the opinion itself, which states: "The Fourteenth Amendment affirms the ancient and fundamental rule of citizenship by birth within the territory, in the allegiance and under the protection of the country, including all children here born of resident aliens."

Wong Kim Ark noted that the 14th Amendment's text excludes several categories of people born in the U.S., such as the children of diplomats and "of enemies within and during a hostile occupation of part of our territory." While that language would seem to refer to the children of soldiers in the invading army of a foreign sovereign, Trump could argue that it applies to undocumented immigrants.

At least one judge, James C. Ho of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, whom Trump appointed, has equated undocumented immigrants with an "invasion" in a different context, but only in dissent. If Ho could not convince even his conservative colleagues on the Fifth Circuit bench, it is difficult to see a majority of justices on the Supreme Court buying this argument.

But even legal failure could mean political victory for Trump. He could portray himself as tough on immigration and blame Congress or judges for resisting his efforts. In the meantime, it is possible that just issuing an executive order to end birthright citizenship, along with promises of "mass deportations," would cause some undocumented immigrants to self-deport or deter them from entering the country in the first place.

The downside is the uncertainty that results when executive orders direct federal employees to take unlawful action. I was serving as a U.S. attorney in Michigan when Trump issued his travel ban in January 2017. The executive order applied to even green card holders, also known as lawful permanent residents, in violation of the due process clause of the Fifth Amendment. The order resulted in chaos at airports and land border crossings as federal officials tried to figure out how to reconcile the order with the law. The order was upheld by the Supreme Court only after two revisions.

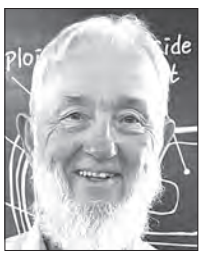
Of course, real border solutions require comprehensive immigration reform, including far more resources for asylum officers, immigration judges, and border patrol agents, all of whom are overwhelmed by the daily crush of migrants seeking to enter the U.S. Relief for source countries to reduce the need for people to flee their homes is also part of any long-term solution.

Tough talk about birthright citizenship may score short-term political points, but it won't solve our country's fundamental immigration problems.

Between the immensities

LITERARY NOOK

By JOEY CONNOLLY
Special to the Saipan Tribune



Joey Connolly aka "Pepe Batbon" is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is the Poet Laureate of Tinian and enjoys stargazing.

Nostalgia, news, and winter blues

"Now is the winter of our discontent" the first
line in William Shakespeare's Richard III.

Winter solstice, Christmas holidays, and the demise of the *Saipan Tribune* bring me both joy and sadness this month. My poems for December will be a tribute to Jayvee Vallejera (former editor) and Mark Rabago, current editor of the paper. They have published my poems and my students' poems from Tinian and Saipan for more than three decades. Discontent and saddened by the newspaper's departure this winter I'll post nostalgic poems that have previously appeared on these pages. Salamat po yan si yu'os ma'ase to readers in the CNMI, PH, and the mainland U.S. Thanks also to the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which states that Congress cannot make laws that prohibit freedom of the press. The U.S. Supreme Court has interpreted "press" broadly to include: Talking, writing, printing, broadcasting, using the internet, and symbolic expression. Merry Christmas, Maligayang Pasko 2024. A nostalgic look back, seven years ago in the *Saipan Tribune* on 12/22/2017:

12 days of celebrating democracy

On the first day of democracy's celebration the nation joins together
in jubilation for all the freedom that U.S. citizenship brings to us
On the second day celebrate how great our separation of church and state
On the third day celebrate our three branches of government: judicial,
executive and legislative.
On the fourth day we have President *FDR's Four Freedoms: freedom of
speech; freedom of worship; freedom from want; freedom from fear.
On the fifth day we celebrate the Fifth Amendment–indictment by a
Grand Jury, double jeopardy, and due process.
On the sixth day we celebrate D-Day, June 6, 1944 when over 160,000
Allied soldiers landed in France to fight for democracy.
On the seventh day celebrate the end of the seven-day work week and the
beginning of the five-day work week in the U.S. between 1908 and 1919.
On the eight day celebrate the eight-hour day and "a living wage."
On the ninth day we celebrate nine Supreme Court justices on the U.S.
Supreme Court.
On the 10th day we celebrate the first 10 Amendments to the U.S.
Constitution which are also called The Bill of Rights.
On the 11th day we celebrate Veteran's Day, a holiday to honor all who
have served in the U.S. military services.
On the 12th we celebrate the birth of the 16th President of the U.S.,
Abraham Lincoln, Feb. 12, 1809.

*(FDR stands for Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 32nd POTUS)

KILLER

From page 6

decision to put time limits on anesthesia coverage.

"We've gotten to a point where health care is so inaccessible and unaffordable, people are justified in their frustrations," Dr. Céline Gounder, CBS News medical contributor and editor-at-large for public health at KFF Health News, told CBS Mornings.

Frustration is justified, killing is not.

After anesthesiologists slammed Anthem Blue Cross and the insurer reversed its plan, New York Rep. Ritchie Torres, D-Bronx, sponsored a bill that would ban health insurers from imposing arbitrary time limits on patients under anesthesia.

That's how you affect change, that's how you reverse bad policies and take action to improve the lives of Americans.

As the accused killer fought extradition to New York in a Pennsylvania court, he shouted: "It's completely out of touch and an insult to the intelligence of the American people and the lived experience!"

He's partly right. Lauding an accused killer is an insult to the intelligence of every law-abiding American. Take Mangione off the pedestal.

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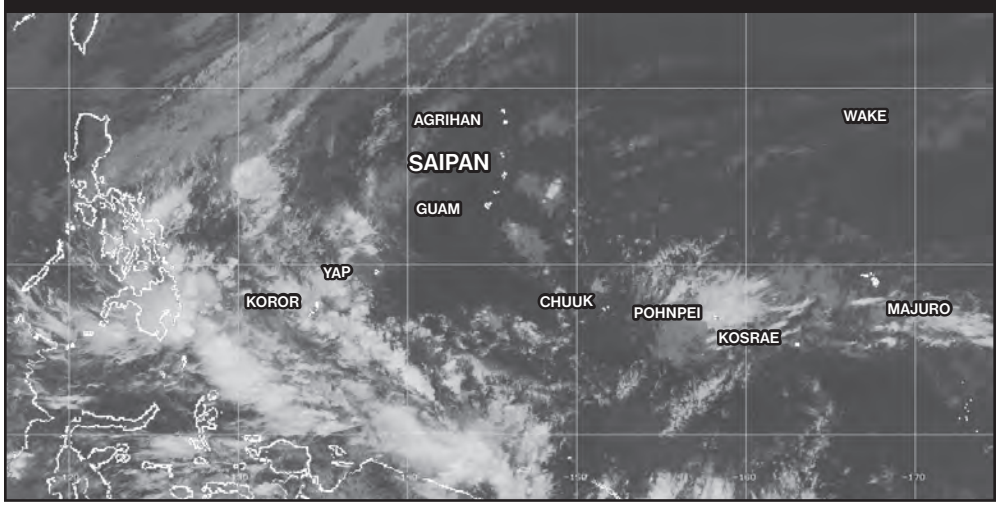
The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Partly sunny with scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms. East winds 15 to 20 mph. Chance of showers 40 percent.	Mostly cloudy with scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms. Southeast winds 15 to 20 mph. Lows around 77. Chance of showers 50 percent.	Mostly cloudy with a 40 percent chance of showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.	Mostly cloudy with a 40 percent chance of showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.	Mostly cloudy with a 40 percent chance of showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.
86° 77°	86° 77°	86° 77°	86° 77°	86° 77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 5:54 PM TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite shows a weak trough that moved across the region overnight, continue to propagate westward, leaving behind partly cloudy skies and isolated showers. Not many changes were made in this forecast cycle. A similar isolated-to-scattered scenario is expect through tonight, before the trades shift east-southeast, ushering in deeper tropical moisture and transitioning to a wetter pattern for the latter half of the week.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy/Wind	86° / 81°
Palau	Cloudy	86° / 78°
Yap	Cloudy	87° / 81°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	87° / 80°
Pohnpei	Light Rain Shower	87° / 79°
Kosrae	Light Rain Shower	86° / 79°
Majuro	Cloudy	85° / 81°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:36 AM	5:50 PM
Thursday	6:37 AM	5:50 PM
Friday	6:37 AM	5:51 PM
Saturday	6:38 AM	5:51 PM
Sunday	6:38 AM	5:52 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	9:08 AM	8:39 PM
Thursday	-	9:54 AM	9:34 PM
Friday	-	10:35 AM	10:26 PM
Saturday	-	11:12 AM	11:14 PM
Sunday	-	11:46 AM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Mostly Cloudy	72° / 62°
Beijing	Fair	47° / 28°
Hong Kong	Fair	65° / 55°
Honolulu	Mostly Cloudy	82° / 70°
London	Cloudy	45° / 36°
Los Angeles	Sunny	65° / 44°
Manila	Mostly Cloudy	88° / 79°
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	91° / 75°
Miami	Cloudy	78° / 74°
New York	Rain Shower	50° / 39°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	53° / 42°
Paris	Partly Cloudy	41° / 28°
Busan	Sunny	36° / 21°
Rome	Mostly Sunny	57° / 37°
Salem	Rain	62° / 60°
San Francisco	Sunny	57° / 46°
Seoul	Mostly Cloudy	38° / 19°
Tokyo	Sunny	56° / 39°
Washington, DC	Cloudy	46° / 39°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
3:34 AM	Low Tide	-0.73
11:00 AM	High Tide	1.72
4:17 PM	Low Tide	1.15
8:35 PM	High Tide	1.65

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	1:20PM	4:00PM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

7C3218/2305	2:45AM	10:20PM	Daily via Incheon
UA076/183 Guam	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:30AM	6:25AM	Daily
7C3218	2:45AM	6:45AM	Daily from Dec 8
7C3212	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

7C3552	3:55AM	7:20AM	3, 6 from Dec 25

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

HX77	3:05AM	5:55AM	1, 5

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	5:30PM	10:05PM	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA156	00:40AM	6:25AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:40AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA156	00:40AM	8:45AM	3, 6 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM +1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3407	11:20PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3211	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	8:00PM	1:30AM+1	Daily
7C3217	8:10PM	1:40AM+1	Daily from Dec 8

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

7C3551	9:25PM	2:50AM+1	2, 5 from Dec 25

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

HX76	6:25PM	1:35AM+1	4, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Federally funded Garapan Elementary School cafeteria inaugurated

School children were joined by public education and government leaders and community members in inaugurating last Monday the newly built federally funded Garapan Elementary School cafeteria. This is the first reconstruction of the cafeteria since it was built over three decades ago.

The sprawling new school cafeteria was rebuilt on the same site after the construction began in 2022.

In the ribbon-cutting ceremony, GES principal Derwin Johnson and his nearly 500 students joined Education Commissioner Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho, Board of Education vice chair Maisie B. Tenorio, Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, Senate President Edith DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan), House Speaker Edmund Villagomez (Ind-Saipan), associate commissioner for Administrative Services Eric Magofna, Public School System-Child Nutrition Program director Dale Roberts, PSS-Facilities Development and Management director Edward Mendiola, Herman Modern Bakery president Herman Guerrero, and HBR International general manager John Gilbert Saludez, among others.

The ribbon cutting was held inside the new facility, in front of the serving counter/lunch line, giving students, school staff, and education and community leaders the first inside look at the vast facility.

"What do you think of your new school cafeteria?" principal Johnson asked his students in his remarks.

"Excellent!" the students replied happily. "It looks beautiful," others said.

PSS

Student leaders led their peers in the official ribbon cutting to formally open the newly constructed Garapan Elementary School cafeteria. The students were joined by principal Derwin Johnson, Education Commissioner Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho, Board of Education vice chair Maisie B. Tenorio, Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, Senate President Edith DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan), House Speaker Edmund Villagomez (Ind-Saipan), associate commissioner for Administrative Services Eric Magofna, PSS-Child Nutrition Program director Dale Roberts, PSS-Facilities Development and Management director Edward Mendiola, Herman Modern Bakery president Herman Guerrero, and HBR International general manager John Gilbert Saludez, among others.

PSS

A student, standing left, sings as part of the student-led celebration yesterday.

Johnson said the students are able to "finally come back and enjoy your meals in a new cafeteria" that has been there since between the 1970s and early 1980s.

"We also have many leaders who have supported our project," the principal added. "It is a great moment and a great day for Garapan Elementary School."

Roberts said, "I worked here for 19 years, and this school is dear to my heart. There are adults in this room who are part of the school's journey, who were once students at one time."

"What we have today is a testament to how important Garapan Elementary School is in the community," Roberts added.

PSS

Education Commissioner Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho during his remarks asked the students, "To continue to love learning."

PSS

Board of Education vice chaiur Maisie B. Tenorio praised the Garapan Elementary School community for the "strong partnership" that led to the construction of the new school cafeteria.

Improved learning atmosphere

The new school cafeteria's opening, according to Camacho, has a direct impact on the enhanced learning environment at Garapan Elementary School—or any school campus where a new facility is constructed, for that matter.

"When we see improvements within our schools, we see the change of atmosphere in our learning climate. It's great that this is happening because we know our students and staff, our parents, and this community that the school serves are happy about the improvements and advancements that we are making," he said.

"I ask that everyone here at Garapan Elementary School take ownership of it. Because this is a component of the ecosystem of support that is required for learning: healthy children create a positive learning environment; children who eat healthily learn better," Camacho stated.

The education chief also expressed his appreciation to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for funding the construction of the school cafeteria, the PSS-CNP Program, PSS-FDM, the contractor, and the school caterer, Herman's Modern Bakery, Inc.

"The U.S. Department of Agriculture provided us with support for this construction as part of the ecosystem of support. We have dedicated ecosystem of support, from our contractor, Facilities Management and Development, and the Child Nutrition Program. I also want to thank the community and leadership of Garapan Elementary School, as well as Herman's Bakery, which will continue to provide wholesome food here," the education commissioner added.

Camacho had only one request for the students: "To our students, continue to love learning."

Tenorio offered her congratulations as well to the GES school community.

"On behalf of chairman Greg Borja, congratulations to all of you for having this beautiful cafeteria," Tenorio said, praising Garapan Elementary School personnel and staff and parents for their leadership and supporting each other in the last four years.

Magofna, in his closing remarks, said, "This is not just a cafeteria: This building is a symbol of our hard work and dedication...To our students of Garapan Elementary School, this is yours."

The new facility has a seating capacity of 418, and Garapan Elementary School will distribute/serve free meals on three staggered schedules to its students, according to Johnson.

USDA surplus funding

The construction was estimated to be at $4 million and was funded under the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Child Nutrition Program's surplus funding.

The brand-new school cafeteria is its first reconstruction. The school opened in 1967 and was relocated to its current location in 1968 after Typhoon Jean ravaged the island. Following the destructive typhoon, school reconstruction began in the early 1980s and followed other repair, reconstruction, and renovation work in the 2000s.

Planning began four years ago. It was in 2022 when the groundbreaking was held, and led by then BOE chair Antonio L. Borja, the non-stop construction officially began.

The multimillion-dollar cafeteria is a single-story concrete facility that has a large new kitchen, an office, storage, and is fully outfitted with an air conditioning system, among other things.

With the unveiling, the school district now has three newly constructed school cafeterias. The other two are at Marianas High School and Koblerville Elementary School. ***(PR)***

PSS

The new school cafeteria was officially opened last Monday by the nearly 500 students from Garapan Elementary School, who sang the national anthem.

World

Ukraine, US say some N. Korean troops killed fighting alongside Russian forces

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—Ukraine's military intelligence agency and the Pentagon said Monday that some North Korean troops have been killed during combat against Ukrainian forces in Russia's Kursk border region.

These are the first reported casualties since the U.S. and Ukraine announced that North Korea had sent 10,000 to 12,000 troops to Russia to help it in the almost 3-year war.

Ukraine's military intelligence agency said around 30 North Korean troops were killed or wounded during battle with the Ukrainian army over the weekend.

The casualties occurred around three villages in Kursk, where Russia has for four months been trying to quash a Ukrainian incursion, the agency, known by its acronym GUR, said in a public post on the Telegram messaging app.

At least three North Korean servicemen went missing around another Kursk village, GUR said.

The White House also said it now believes North Korean troops are on the "front lines" of Russia's war and are "actively engaged in combat operations" against Ukraine.

National security spokesman John Kirby confirmed the assessment Monday after Ukraine's government said North Korean troops had moved from support roles into direct fighting on behalf of Russia. Kirby said North Korean troops are taking casualties in the fighting and promised a strong U.S. and allied sanctions response to North Korea.

Negotiators say Israel and Hamas are inching toward a ceasefire deal

After months of deadlock, Israel and Hamas appear to be moving closer toward a ceasefire to end their 14-month war.

Top officials from the U.S., Qatar and Egypt have resumed their mediation efforts in recent weeks and reported greater willingness by the warring sides to wrap up a deal. In a key concession, Hamas officials say they are prepared to show more "flexibility" on the timing of an Israeli troop withdrawal from Gaza, and Israel's defense minister, Israel Katz, said Monday that a deal is closer than ever.

Officials on all sides have cautioned that key details must still be worked out. But there is a general sense of optimism that has been lacking for many months.

The changing sentiment appears to be the result of several factors. Israel has inflicted heavy damage on Hamas over the course of the war. The group is more isolated after Hezbollah's ceasefire with Israel, and Iran, a key backer of both militant groups, has suffered a number of setbacks, highlighted by the downfall of its close ally, Syria's Bashar Assad.

In the U.S., both the outgoing Biden administration and the incoming administration of President-elect Donald Trump have signaled they want a deal completed before the Jan. 20 inauguration.

According to Egyptian and Hamas officials, the agreement would take place in phases and include a halt in fighting, an exchange of captive Israeli hostages for Palestinian prisoners, and a surge in aid to the besieged Gaza Strip. Israel says Hamas is holding 100 hostages—over one-third of whom are believed to be dead.

Here is a closer look at the emerging deal, according to the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were discussing closed negotiations.

Preliminary ceasefire

The first phase would last from six to eight weeks. During that time, Hamas would release some 30 hostages – roughly half of those believed alive. They include three or four dual U.S.-Israeli citizens.

Israel would release hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, including as many as 100 who are serving long sentences for alleged involvement in bloody attacks.

Increased aid

The deal calls for a massive increase in aid to Gaza, which has plunged into a humanitarian crisis during the 14-month war. An estimated 90% of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been displaced, in many cases multiple times, and aid workers report severe hunger across the territory.

This is expected to include a reopening of the territory's Rafah crossing with Egypt, which has been closed since Israeli ground troops invaded the southern border town in May. The crossing is especially important because it is the primary exit point for Palestinians in Gaza who want to travel abroad, and the only one not controlled by Israel.

Mediators say they are considering a return to a 2005 agreement that allowed the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority to operate the crossing with European Union observers. That agreement collapsed when Hamas seized control of Gaza in 2007 and expelled the Palestinian Authority forces.

Israeli troop withdrawals

During the first phase, Israeli troops would withdraw from some Palestinian population centers, allowing many Palestinians to begin returning home. But Israeli troops wouldn't leave Gaza altogether at this stage. They would remain along the Philadelphi corridor—a strategic strip of land along Gaza's border with Egypt.

Ending the war

During the initial ceasefire, the sides would continue negotiations on a permanent agreement, to include an end to the war, full withdrawal of Israeli troops, and release of remaining hostages and bodies held by Hamas.

Talks would begin on final arrangements for Gaza, including who would govern the territory and plans for rebuilding the destruction. ***(AP)***

Life & Style

UNDER THE INCOMING TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Journalists anticipate renewed hostility toward their work

NEW YORK (AP)—For the press heading into a second Trump administration, there's a balancing act between being prepared and being fearful.

The return to power of Donald Trump, who has called journalists enemies and talked about retribution against those he feels have wronged him, has news executives nervous. Perceived threats are numerous: lawsuits of every sort, efforts to unmask anonymous sources, physical danger and intimidation, attacks on public media and libel protections, day-to-day demonization.

In a closely-watched case settled over the weekend, ABC chose to settle a defamation lawsuit brought by the president-elect over an inaccurate statement made by George Stephanopoulos by agreeing to pay $15 million toward Trump's presidential library.

"The news media is heading into this next administration with its eyes open," said Bruce Brown, executive director of the Reporters Committee for the Freedom of the Press.

"Some challenges to the free press may be overt, some may be more subtle," Brown said. "We'll need to be prepared for rapid response as well as long campaigns to protect our rights—and to remember that our most important audiences are the courts and the public."

One prominent editor warned against going on war footing with an administration that hasn't taken office yet. "There may be a moment to cry wolf here," said Stephen Engelberg, editor-in-chief of the nonprofit news outlet ProPublica. "But I don't think we've reached it."

Trump at news conference: 'We have to straighten out the press.'

At a news conference on Monday, Trump said that "we need a fair media" and discussed some potential and ongoing legal cases he has against news outlets.

"We have to straighten out the press," Trump said. "Our press is very corrupt, almost as corrupt as our elections."

News organizations are heading into the second Trump era weak both financially and in public esteem. To a large extent, Trump sidestepped legacy media outlets during his campaign in favor of podcasters, yet still had time for specific beefs against ABC, CBS and NBC.

The Trump team knows that many of its followers despise a probing press, and stoking that fury has political advantages. Two examples in the campaign to install Trump nominee Pete Hegseth as defense secretary shows how routine reporting activities can be characterized as an attack.

When The New York Times was tipped to an email that Hegseth's mother once sent to him criticizing his treatment of women, it called her for comment. Penelope Hegseth later told Fox News that she perceived that as a threat, even though it enabled the newspaper to report that she had quickly apologized for sending the email and says she doesn't feel that way about him now.

Pete Hegseth also used social media to say that ProPublica—he called it a "Left Wing hack group"—was about to knowingly publish a false report that he hadn't been accepted into West Point decades ago. The news site had contacted him after officials at the military academy contradicted Hegseth's claim of acceptance. Hegseth provided proof that those officials were mistaken, and ProPublica never published a story.

"That's journalism," noted ProPublica's Jesse Eisinger. But a narrative had taken hold: "ProPublica's botched Pete Hegseth smear," the New York Post called it in a headline.

Keeping an eye on how journalists' work is portrayed

During the presidential campaign, Trump sued CBS News for the way it edited an interview with opponent Kamala Harris; suggested ABC News lose its broadcast license for fact-checking him during his lone debate with Harris; and successfully called for equal time on NBC after Harris appeared on "Saturday Night Live." In the Stephanopoulos lawsuit, the ABC anchor said Trump had been "found liable for rape" in writer E. Jean Carroll's civil trial, when he had not.

At his news conference, Trump said he was expecting to file a lawsuit against the Des Moines Register in Iowa for publishing results of a poll shortly before the election that suddenly had him behind Harris. He said that amounted to "fraud and election interference." He eventually won the state handily. Spokeswoman Lark-Marie Anton says the Register stands by its reporting and believes a lawsuit would be without merit.

Trump engages with the mainstream media—besides the news conference Monday he gave a newsmaking interview to NBC's "Meet the Press" this month—but journalists have to be alert to how their work will be portrayed.

Trump's appointments, and what they've said about journalists, have raised alarms.

Kash Patel, Trump's choice to lead the FBI, said on a podcast last year that "we're going to come after people in the media who lied about American citizens." Two appointees who have expressed hostility toward the media will be in a position to impact the work of journalists: Brendan Carr as chairman of the Federal Communications Commission and Kari Lake as director of Voice of America.

News organizations are worried that a Justice Department policy that has generally prohibited prosecutors from seizing the records of journalists in order to investigate leaks will be reversed, and are already urging journalists to protect their work. "If you have something you don't want to share with a broader audience, don't put it on the cloud," ProPublica's Engelberg said.

During the first Trump administration, some journalists who covered immigration issues were pulled aside for screening and questioning. The Reporter's Committee wonders if this might happen again—and whether similar practices might extend toward reporting on expected deportations.

The literary and human rights organization PEN America is concerned about journalists facing physical danger and digital hostility. It may have seemed like a flippant remark to some of his supporters when Trump, months after an attempt on his life, said at a rally that he wouldn't mind if somebody had to "shoot through the fake news" to get to him. But it wasn't for people standing on media risers.

"It's important that the president act with responsibility to reduce physical violence against the press rather than encourage it," said Viktorya Vilk, PEN America's program director for digital safety and free expression.

Sen. John Kennedy of Louisiana recently introduced a bill that would end taxpayer funding for public radio and television, a longtime goal of many Republicans that may get momentum with the party back in power. Some U.S. Supreme Court justices are eager to revisit a legal precedent that has made it difficult to prove defamation against news organizations.

It's apparent that the new administration will come after the press in every conceivable way, former Washington Post editor Martin Baron said recently on NPR. "I do think he will use every tool in his toolbox," Baron said, "and there are a lot of tools."

Hungary's experience inspires pessimism—but maybe a glimmer of hope

In their most pessimistic moments, advocates for the press look at what has happened in Hungary under the control of Prime Minister Viktor Orban. Since Orban took control in 2010, he and his supporters have taken control of most media and turned it into a propaganda arm.

Don't think that can't happen in the United States, warns Andras Petho, an investigative journalist in Hungary who left a news website when it was pressured to stifle his work, and started the investigative journalism center Direkt36.

Despite repression, there is still a market for independent journalism in Hungary, he said. Earlier this year, two Hungarian officials resigned following an outcry when it was revealed that they had pardoned a man who had forced children to retract sexual abuse claims made against the director of a government-run facility.

Petho said it is important for journalists not to portray themselves as any sort of resistance, because that makes it easier for the government to dismiss them. Instead, they should just do the work.

"To be honest, we all have to accept and admit that our power as media has declined," said Petho, who participated in the Nieman fellowship for journalists at Harvard University. "Our stories don't have the same impact that they had a decade ago. But I wouldn't underestimate the power of the news media, either."

Exes check in to a new phase of uncertainty

DEAR ABBY: I was with my ex-fiance for 13 years. Not long after he broke up with me, I found myself going to meet him at a hotel. We have been seeing each other regularly, once a week at least. We go out and enjoy our time together like we are dating.

The frustrating thing is, he doesn't want to let me know where he lives. He says it's a comfort thing for him to have "just his space." It has been a year and a half since our breakup. Anytime I ask about our situation, he says he doesn't know what he wants.

All of the things he does for me show he loves and cares about me. It feels like we are in this weird limbo, almost like he's stringing me along because he doesn't say if he ever wants to get back together. He says, "Why can't you just enjoy what we're doing?" I want more with him and better than we had before.

We were in a bad place before, and I didn't treat him well. I was going through things and took it out on him. In our time apart, no longer being a couple, I have worked on myself to become a happier and healthier person and have gotten my life in order. I love him very much, and I am hoping for more. Any advice?

SITUATIONSHIP IN CALIFORNIA

DEAR SITUATIONSHIP: When a person is secretive, they usually have something to hide. Because your not-quite-ex refuses to give you his address (after a year and a half!), it's likely he has someone living there with him. Before your engagement ended, you demonstrated that you could be abusive when you were stressed. That he doesn't want to risk another round of that is understandable.

From what you have written, he's enjoying things just the way they are. He doesn't WANT more. Because you do, you will have to find someone who can give you the future you're looking for.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I am a straight male who likes wearing ladies' biker shorts under my shorts and pants. In the winter, I love wearing ladies' leggings and stockings because they keep my legs warm. I also love the way they feel. No one knows about me doing this. I've been in a relationship for many years, and my girlfriend doesn't know. Is it OK to wear these items?

SECRETIVE IN NEW YORK

DEAR SECRETIVE: From your description, you are what is defined as an undercover cross-dresser. By doing this, you are hurting no one. You are far from the only man who enjoys it. Yes, it's OK to continue as you have been doing.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I have a brother-in-law who, when he gives a hello or goodbye hug, wants to give a kiss on the lips. My wife doesn't want the kiss and turns her head away. He then proceeds to kiss her on the cheek, which she doesn't want either, especially when it's an open-mouth slobber. He does this with other sisters-in-law, and most of them turn their heads when he comes running with the pucker. How can we approach this situation without hurting his feelings or embarrassing him?

SMOOCHED IN WISCONSIN

DEAR SMOOCHED: May it be frank? People who are so insensitive that they fail to recognize when a kiss is unwanted NEED to be told directly that it is a turnoff. If that "embarrasses" the kisser, so be it. (Yuck!)

■■■

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable—and most frequently requested—poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

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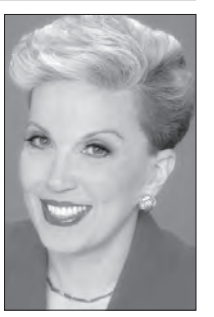
DEAR ABBY

BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

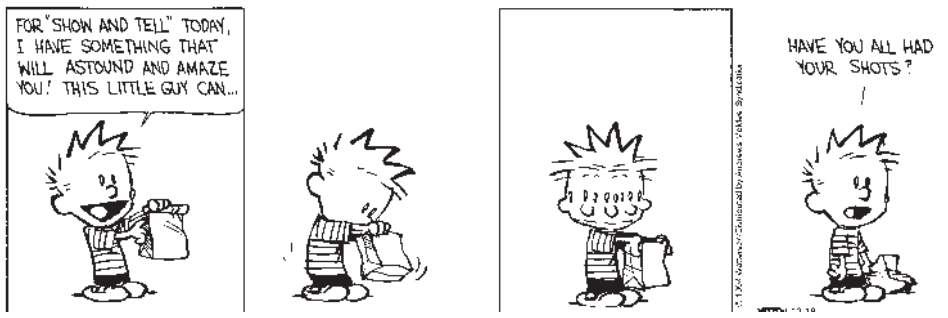


Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

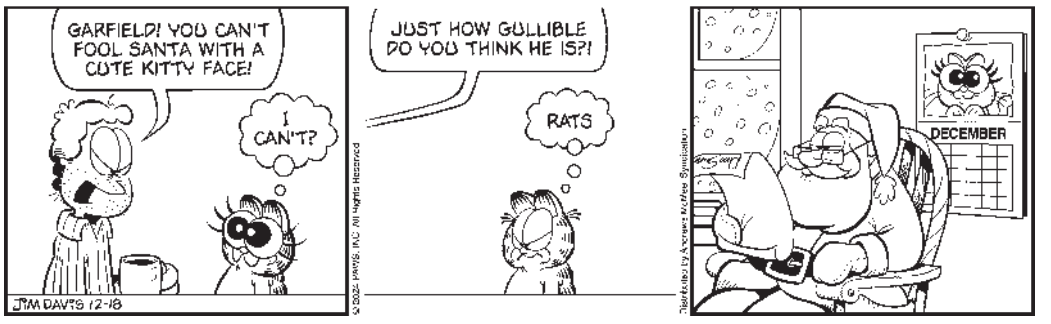
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



Garfield®

By Jim Davis



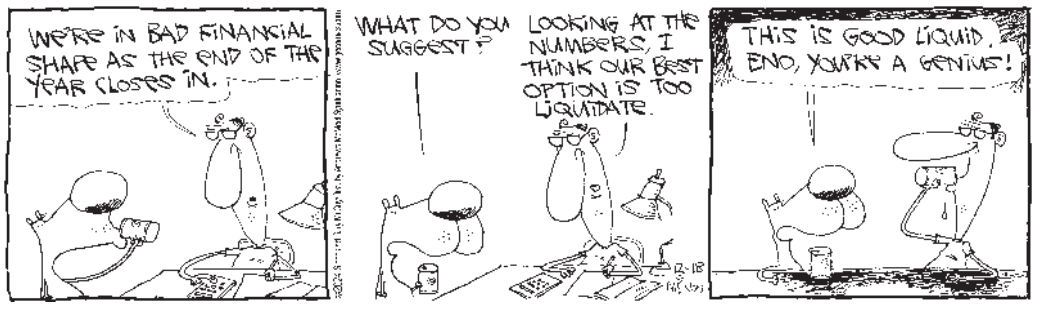
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

ARE YOU EVEN EXCITED FOR CHRISTMAS?
OF COURSE I AM.
WELL, I CAN'T TELL. LOOK AT YOU.
WHAT?? I HAVE A WREATH ON MY SHIRT!
IT'S TRUE. MY COMMITMENT IS HARD TO MATCH.
LIKE YOUR JINGLE BELL UNDERPANTS. I'M JUST NOT DOING THAT.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


WE'RE IN BAD FINANCIAL SHAPE AS THE END OF THE YEAR CLOSES IN.
WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST?
LOOKING AT THE NUMBERS, I THINK OUR BEST OPTION IS TOO LIQUIDATE.
THIS IS GOOD LIQUID, ENO, YOU'RE A GENIUS!

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Jazzy Fitzgerald
5 Em halves
8 Band boosters
12 Crucifix
13 "Delicious!"
14 Hay unit
15 '90s dance craze
17 Kilt wearer
18 Pals in Mexico City
19 Young hogs
21 Moody music
22 Frankfurt fellow
23 $ dispenser
26 Canine greeting
28 Steak choice
31 Scottish hillside
33 Historic time
35 Unforeseen problem
36 Washer phase
38 Moreover
40 Judge in 1995 news
41 Lip soother
43 Verb for you
45 Ado
47 Entertain
51 Altar vows
52 Problem-solving TV hero of the '80s/'90s
54 Facebook action
55 Essen exclamation
56 Pong preceder
57 Dick Tracy's love
58 Messy room
59 Art colony in New Mexico

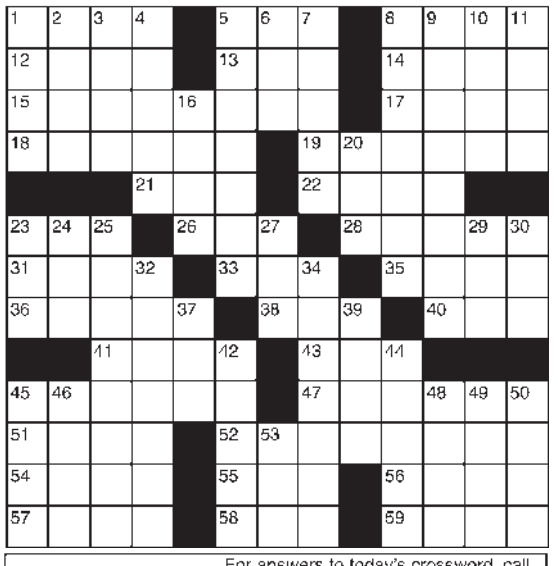
DOWN

1 Gospel singer Franklin
2 Clay-rich soil
3 Places
4 Maxim
5 Ugly building
6 Convent resident
7 Big hit
8 Soaks up
9 Salad pasta
10 Conspiracy
11 Collections
16 Capital of Italia
20 All — up (anxious)
23 "GMA" network
24 Sample
25 Popular laptops
27 Monk's title
29 D.C. baseballer
30 Alter —
32 Passes by
34 "Sons of —" (FX series)
37 Right angle
39 Bottom-of-the-barrel bit
42 May honorees
44 Cairo's nation
45 Sword handle
46 "Garfield" dog
48 Athletic shoe brand
49 Carson's successor
50 Work units
53 Revue segment

Solution time: 23 mins.

P	O	P	E	■	F	O	R	■	F	O	P	S
U	G	L	Y	■	L	O	O	■	O	D	E	A
F	R	E	E	C	O	P	Y	■	O	I	N	K
F	E	D	■	E	O	S	■	I	D	E	A	S
■	■	■	F	O	R	■	E	S	C	■	■	■
D	A	L	I	S	■	S	N	O	O	P	E	R
O	L	E	G	■	C	A	D	■	U	R	S	A
C	A	S	H	O	U	T	■	C	R	E	S	T
■	■	■	T	R	E	■	B	A	T	■	■	■
R	E	A	C	T	■	P	O	I	■	A	W	W
T	A	L	L	■	F	U	N	N	Y	C	A	R
C	S	A	U	■	O	R	C	■	O	N	C	E
S	E	R	B	■	X	E	S	■	N	E	O	N

Yesterday's answer 12-18



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Christina Aguilera, 44; Katie Holmes, 46; Brad Pitt, 61; Steven Spielberg, 78.

Happy Birthday: Giving and taking will be necessary this year. Consider what you can afford, set a budget and stick to your plans. Easing stress will encourage you to see situations clearly and to disarm anyone trying to take advantage of you or push you in a direction that benefits them more than you. A change will be necessary to avoid temptation, vulnerability and excess. Your numbers are 5, 12, 21, 24, 37, 43, 46.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Travel and engage in social events and activities that get your juices flowing. Refuse to let outsiders disrupt your plans or lead you astray. Focus on personal and physical improvements, emotional growth and new opportunities. Choose forward motion over retreat. Romance is in the stars. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Rethink your every move. A hasty decision will lead to mistakes and problems with someone you live or work alongside. Map out your plans, get approval or the necessary documents in order, and put what you want in writing to avoid repercussions. If something irks you, speak up and make a difference. ✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Make travel plans, attend a reunion or choose to make your space comfortable and convenient. Addressing issues with someone you care about will make a difference in the outcome. Be willing to compromise, but don't put yourself in a vulnerable position. Choose your words wisely. Overreacting will set you back. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Pay attention to detail and add your unique touch. Your actions will resonate with those competing with you. Be receptive to help and suggestions, but don't reveal your secrets. The idea is to do what's best, put your ego aside and protect what you strive to achieve. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Let your energy flow. Your infectious attitude and free spirit will help you get whatever assistance you require to fulfill your needs. Be brave, outgoing and entertaining; everything will fall into place. Someone you meet will brighten your day with encouraging words of wisdom. Romance is on the rise. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Trouble will follow if you let temptation take over. Too much of anything will turn into a problem. Focus more on detail, cost and budgeting for what's important to you. Set boundaries that protect you from being bullied into something you should avoid. Discipline is your best friend. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Apply for an advanced position, and commit to enhancing your skills or learning something new. Update your look to fit the direction you want to pursue. It's up to you to make the moves that ensure victory. Take responsibility, and turn prospects into a reality. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Put drama aside and focus on being creative. You'll attract attention and criticism. Take care of details, be prepared to defend your position and ensure you retain the freedom to follow your heart. Recognize the difference between an opportunity and a bribe. Set high standards and get what you want in writing. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Consider what you are up against and what you can do about it before you act. Pace yourself, consider your budget and work out a plan that will put your mind at ease and guide you toward emotional and financial stability. ✪✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Challenge yourself before others do. Strive to be and do your best, and labor over details that can make the difference between winning and losing. Refrain from letting someone railroad you into something that doesn't benefit you directly. Avoid joint ventures and shared expenses. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Broaden your outlook and look for opportunities that help you better use your space or bring in additional income. Keep an open mind when dealing with people who have something to contribute. Listening to suggestions will help you recognize what's doable. Romance looks promising. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Keep a watchful eye and a tally of what things cost. Excessive behavior will adversely affect how you feel and what you get in return. Changing how you handle money, health and prospects will be advantageous if you follow the rules and use the proper channels. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are lighthearted, imaginative and impulsive. You are trendy and vibrant.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

2	7	9		3				
8				9	4		3	5
					8			1
	4	2						
3			9			1		
9				8				
						5		
	3	7		4	5			2
					9	7	8	

Difficulty: ★★★ 12/18

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

6	8	5	9	1	3	2	7	4
9	7	3	5	2	4	8	6	1
1	2	4	7	8	6	9	5	3
2	3	1	6	7	5	4	9	8
5	4	8	3	9	1	7	2	6
7	9	6	8	4	2	3	1	5
8	6	2	1	3	9	5	4	7
4	5	7	2	6	8	1	3	9
3	1	9	4	5	7	6	8	2

Difficulty: ★★ 12/17

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

LET'S WATCH 'ELF' Solution: 8 letters

G	N	I	S	W	M	I	L	E	S	F	I	N	C	H
I	C	E	S	K	A	T	I	N	G	I	F	T	D	U
M	W	I	L	L	F	E	R	R	E	L	L	N	M	G
B	A	S	U	S	I	E	L	I	M	S	I	A	I	S
E	L	I	S	T	M	A	C	O	U	K	P	C	C	Y
L	T	L	R	I	U	H	K	A	R	L	A	S	H	T
S	E	L	L	G	E	E	L	A	E	N	P	E	A	I
A	R	Y	H	E	I	C	P	S	D	L	A	G	E	C
M	H	O	R	V	A	L	Y	Y	H	E	E	A	L	K
T	O	J	O	T	A	R	C	P	T	G	L	N	L	R
S	B	J	N	R	U	O	L	A	P	N	F	A	E	O
I	B	A	T	P	R	O	D	L	R	A	P	H	V	Y
R	S	N	E	N	G	I	N	E	A	D	H	P	A	W
H	E	L	O	P	H	T	R	O	N	T	S	R	R	E
C	O	T	T	O	N	H	E	A	D	S	Y	O	T	N

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Angel, Candy Corn, Cards, Central Park, Cheer, Christmas, Cotton Head, Date, Emily, Engine, Gift, Gimbels, Happy, Hugs, Ice Skating, Jovie, Joy, Kind, Laugh, List, Maple Syrup, Michael, Miles Finch, New York City, North Pole, Orphanage, Papa Elf, Santa Claus, Silly, Sing, Smile, Susie, Tall, Toys, Travel, Walter Hobbs, Will Ferrell

Yesterday's Answer: Big Red Machine

For **WONDERWORD** apps, books & more, visit Wonderword.com, or call 1-855-232-2367.

Vikings win 7th straight with blowout of reeling Bears

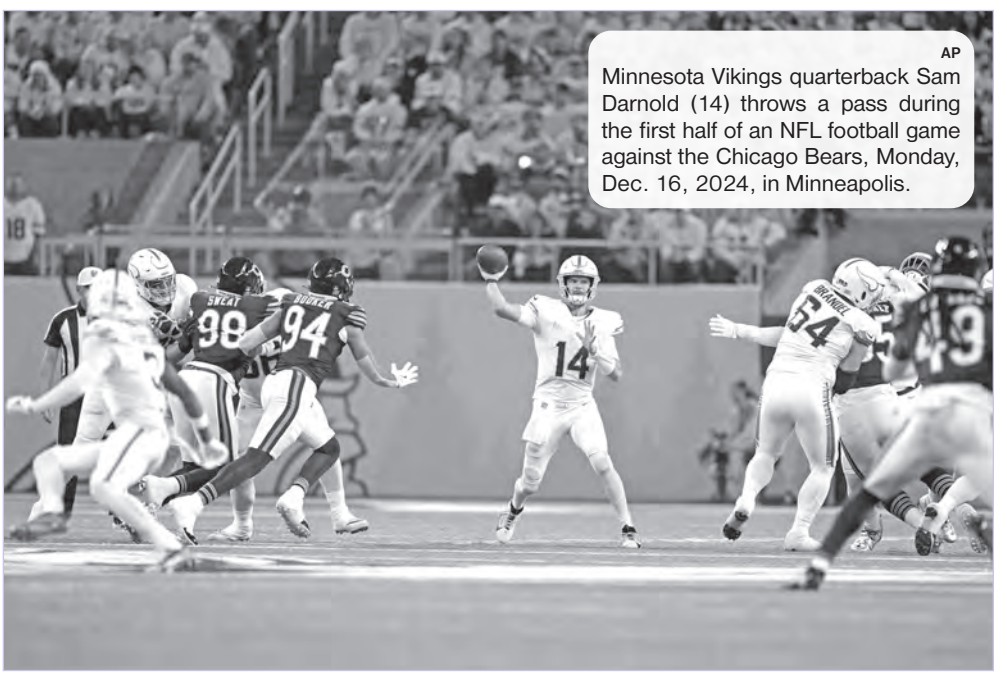
MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Aaron Jones and Cam Akers had touchdown runs in the second half to complement a smothering performance by the Minnesota defense, and the Vikings moved into a tie for first place in the NFC North on Monday night by beating the Chicago Bears 30-12 for their seventh consecutive victory.

Justin Jefferson had seven catches for 73 yards, among them a touchdown from Sam Darnold in the first quarter that was set up by Jonathan Greenard's sack and forced fumble on Caleb Williams.

Williams managed to keep alive his NFL rookie record streak of 286 straight passes without an interception for the eighth straight game, but the Bears (4-10) have lost all of those. The first overall pick in the 2024 draft went 18 for 31 for 191 yards and threw a late touchdown pass to Keenan Allen after a blocked punt gave the Bears the ball at the Minnesota 27.

The Bears went 1 for 12 on third down and 1 for 3 on fourth down.

Darnold went 24 for 40 for 231 yards and threw his first interception in five games for the Vikings (12-2), who clinched a spot in the playoffs with Seattle's loss to Green Bay the night before. They've got the division title squarely on their radar after Detroit's 11-game winning streak was stopped by Buffalo on Sunday.



AP

Minnesota Vikings quarterback Sam Darnold (14) throws a pass during the first half of an NFL football game against the Chicago Bears, Monday, Dec. 16, 2024, in Minneapolis.

Wearing white helmets for the first time in franchise history to top the snow-like jerseys and pants in their now-annual winter-themed home game—comfortably staged indoors—the Vikings had an energized crowd behind them after former wide receivers Cris Carter and Jake Reed took a Randy Moss jersey to midfield for the coin flip in honor of their ex-teammate, who is being treated for cancer. Jefferson shouted, "We love you, Randy!" after his touchdown catch.

» Forge tie for NFC North lead

D'Andre Swift rushed 19 times for 79 yards for the Bears, who've been outscored 53-0 in the first half over the last three games. According to Sportradar, they're the first team with three consecutive scoreless first halves since Jacksonville in 2018.

The Bears have been reeling not simply because of the losing streak but their 2-6 record in games decided by a touchdown or less. The firings last month of offensive coordinator Shane Waldron and later coach Matt Eberflus prompted a change in play-callers on both side of the ball, too.

Once again, the Bears produced a handful of can't-happen plays that ultimately doomed them. Swift was stuffed for no gain on a toss sweep on fourth-and-1 from the Chicago 39 on the opening possession and again on a fourth-and-1 run at the Minnesota 29 in the second quarter.

In the third quarter, Swift had a short touchdown run negated by a penalty when backup center Doug Kramer neglected to report as an eligible receiver when he'd entered the game as an extra blocker at the goal line.

After that, rookie Kiran Amegadjie, who took three penalties in his first NFL start and was beaten badly by Greenard on the strip-sack, was called for holding. The Bears settled for a short field goal.

FALCONS 15, RAIDERS 9

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Kirk Cousins threw his first touchdown pass in five weeks and the Atlanta Falcons did just enough Monday night to beat the struggling Las Vegas Raiders 15-9 and keep pace in the NFC South race.

Trying to pull off a late comeback, Raiders quarterback Desmond Ridder lofted two desperation passes into the end zone in the final 10 seconds. The first was incomplete and the second was intercepted by Jessie Bates III.

The Falcons (7-7) ended a four-game losing streak to remain a game behind the first-place Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Atlanta owns the head-to-head tiebreaker.

Las Vegas (2-12) lost its 10th consecutive game, the NFL's longest active skid, and is tied with the New York Giants for the league's worst record. It's the fifth-longest skid in Raiders history, and worst since dropping 16 straight a decade ago.

Cousins entered with no touchdown passes and eight interceptions over his previous four starts, raising questions about whether rookie Michael Penix Jr. would take over at quarterback. Falcons coach Raheem Morris stuck by Cousins—who signed a four-year, $180 million contract this year—over the eighth overall pick in the NFL draft.

Cousins did little to assuage concerns about his play, passing for just 112 yards with an interception. His 30-yard pass to a wide-open Drake London with 14 seconds left in the first quarter to put Atlanta ahead 7-0 was his first touchdown toss since firing three of them Nov. 3 in a 27-21 victory over the Dallas Cowboys.

The Falcons got the rest of their points on two field goals from Younghoe Koo and a safety by defensive lineman Zach Harrison.

Bijan Robinson rushed for 125 yards and London caught three passes for 53 yards to give him 219 career receptions. London passed Calvin Ridley's 217 catches for most in Falcons history over a player's first three seasons.

Atlanta prevented Ridder from putting a dent in its playoff plans. Ridder, who started 13 games for the Falcons last season before he was traded to Arizona, was stymied most of the night in his first start this season. In replacing Aidan O'Connell, inactive because of a bruised left knee, Ridder passed for 208 yards with a touchdown and two interceptions.

The injury-riddled Raiders gained just 249 yards, and they have trailed by double digits in all 14 games this season.

O'Connell wasn't the only player missing. Defensive end Maxx Crosby announced Saturday he would be undergoing season-ending ankle surgery, and the Raiders were without about half their starting defensive lineup.

Las Vegas also lost running back Sincere McCormick, who had recently become the starter, to an ankle injury early in the second quarter.

Saquon Barkley is chasing Eric Dickerson's NFL season rushing record. Can he do it?

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Saquon Barkley's "minor injury" may have played a major role in the Eagles running back losing ground in his pursuit of Eric Dickerson's season rushing record.

After topping 100 yards rushing in each of his last four games, Barkley ran for 65 yards on 19 carries—a 3.4-yard average and his second-lowest total of the season—in Philadelphia's 27-13 win over the Pittsburgh Steelers on Sunday.

Barkley remained the NFL rushing leader with 1,688 yards—though he needs some big outings over the next three games to top Dickerson and his 2,105 yards for the Los Angeles Rams in 1984.

Barkley needs 418 yards over the final three games—just over 139 yards per game—to break Dickerson's record. The 27-year-old Barkley has surpassed that total five times this season.

Barkley gets an extra shot at the NFL record thanks to a 17th game of the season that Dickerson and the NFL did not have in 1984.

Here's a look at what's ahead for Barkley and his chances of catching Dickerson:

Where does Barkley stand in the record chase?

Barkley leads the NFL in rushing with 1,688 yards, a hefty 214 yards ahead of Baltimore's Derrick Henry at 1,474.

Barkley was drilled in the right knee by Pittsburgh's Minkah Fitzpatrick and then landed on his right shoulder late in the first quarter. He was briefly examined and returned to the sideline with his helmet in hand.

He rushed two times for 3 yards after the hit, then didn't have another carry until after halftime.

Barkley declined to say exactly what bothered him, only that his right knee was fine and he was not injured on Fitzpatrick's hit.

"Nothing crazy. Little minor," Barkley said. "Get ready for next week."

What's the schedule like for Barkley?

Just on the quality of defenses alone, Barkley faces little pushback down the stretch.

After he was stymied by the Steelers, Barkley could run wild against Washington, Dallas and the Giants, who both rank near the bottom of the league against the run.

The Commanders are 26th in the NFL in rushing defense.

The Giants are one of two teams who have allowed more than 2,000 yards rushing this season while the Cowboys are close behind at 1,905.

Why is Barkley with the Eagles?

The 27-year-old Barkley has flourished in his first season with the Eagles.

Barkley might enjoy the delicious twist of setting the record against his old team, the Giants — but surely not the 17th-game asterisk that would come with the total.

Barkley was drafted out of Penn State with the No. 2 overall pick in the 2018 draft. He was an instant success in New York and ran for 1,307 yards his rookie season. Barkley ran for 5,211 yards and 35 touchdowns and had 288 receptions for 2,100 yards and 12 TDs in six years with the Giants.

He hit free agency after the Giants elected not to put a franchise tag on him.

Barkley signed a three-year deal with the Eagles for $26 million guaranteed and $37.75 million overall, making him the highest-paid running back in franchise history.

His free agency was chronicled by the reality sports documentary television series "Hard Knocks."

In the crucial scene, Giants general manager Joe Schoen told Barkley the Giants would not make him an offer, nor stick the franchise tag on him. Rather, the Giants would let Barkley test the free-agent market, a move that sent him to an NFC East rival.

"I'll have a tough time sleeping if Saquon goes to Philadelphia, I'll tell you that," team owner John Mara said to Schoen in the series. "As I've told you, just being around enough players, he's the most popular player we have, by far."

Under general manager Howie Roseman, the Eagles generally had been loath to use high draft picks or valuable salary cap space on a running back.

Barkley was deemed a worthy exception.

Can Barkley stay healthy?

Barkley has been a workhorse this season and worked a heavy load in New York—when he was healthy. Barkley only twice played in 16 games with the Giants.

He played in 14 games last season, missing three because of a high ankle sprain. He ran for 962 yards and six touchdowns. He was limited to two games in 2020 after he suffered a torn ACL.

Barkley has played through minor injuries this season—like against Pittsburgh—but has otherwise proved his durability by leading the NFL with 285 carries.

The first time around

Barkley may not top Dickerson's total just based on his performances in the first three meetings against his division rivals.

Barkley ran for 146 yards and two TDs in November against Washington and 176 yards and a touchdown in his first career game against the Giants. He ran for only 66 yards against Dallas.

Impressive numbers but they only add up to 388 yards—a pace that would leave him shy of the setting the NFL record by 30 yards.

Who was Eric Dickerson?

Sporting his trademark goggles and Jheri curl, Dickerson was one of the great running backs in the 1980s, and the Hall of Famer was widely considered one of the best of all time.

Dickerson finished his career with 13,259 yards, the ninth-most in NFL history. Emmitt Smith holds the career NFL rushing record with 18,355 yards.

In 1984, Dickerson topped 100 yards rushing 12 times to break Buffalo's O.J. Simpson's 1973 record of 2,003 yards rushing in a single season.

Simpson set his record in 14 games before the NFL expanded to 16 in 1978. The NFL moved to 17 games in 2021.

Pistons snap Heat's 4-game winning streak with OT win

AP
Detroit Pistons center Jalen Duren reacts after being whistled for fouling Miami Heat forward Jimmy Butler on a dunk during the first half of an NBA basketball game Monday, Dec. 16, 2024, in Detroit.

DETROIT (AP)—Tim Hardaway Jr. hit three 3-pointers in overtime to help the Detroit Pistons end the Miami Heat's four-game winning streak with a 125-124 victory on Monday night.

Cade Cunningham had 20 points, a career-high 18 assists and 11 rebounds for the Pistons, his sixth triple-double of the season. Jimmy Butler had 35 points, 19 rebounds and 10 assists for Miami.

Malik Beasley led the Pistons with 28 points and went 7 of 13 on 3-pointers.

Miami trailed by 19 points in the second half, but finished regulation on an 18-2 run before scoring the first eight points of overtime.

Hardaway's first two 3s pulled Detroit within 122-120 with 1:35 left in OT. After Tyler Herro missed an off-balance jumper, Hardaway hit another 3 to put the Pistons ahead 123-122.

Butler and Cunningham traded baskets before Herro missed again with 19 seconds to play. A turnover gave Miami one more chance, but Herro missed a 3 at the buzzer.

NUGGETS 130, KINGS 129

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—Jamal Murray made a go-ahead jumper with 8.6 seconds remaining and the Denver Nuggets rallied past the Sacramento Kings 130-129 on Monday night.

Nikola Jokic had his NBA-leading 10th triple-double with 20 points, 14 rebounds and 13 assists as the Nuggets ended Sacramento's three-game winning streak. Murray scored 28 points, while Russell Westbrook had 18 points, nine rebounds and 10 assists.

Denver (14-10) trailed by 10 with four minutes remaining before storming back on the strength of a 14-3 spurt.

The teams exchanged leads seven times over the final 75 seconds, with Murray nailing the decisive shot about 12 seconds after DeMar DeRozan put the Kings (13-14) in front with a baseline dunk.

DeRozan missed inside in the final seconds, and the Nuggets held on.

Domantas Sabonis had 28 points, 14 rebounds and six assists for the Kings. De'Aaron Fox added 29 points and seven assists. Malik Monk scored 25.

76ERS 121, HORNETS 108

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—Tyrese Maxey scored 40 points, Paul George added 33 points as Philadelphia spoiled LaMelo Ball's return to the floor with a win over Charlotte.

Maxey and George were combined for 12 for 21 on 3-pointers.

Kelly Oubre Jr. had 19 points, while Andre Drummond, starting in place of the injured Joel Embiid, chipped in with 15 rebounds for the 76ers (8-16).

Miles Bridges had 24 points and Nick Richards added 19 points off the bench to lead the Hornets.

Ball returned to action after missing the last seven games with a strained calf, finishing with 15 points and 11 assists in nearly 26 minutes.

Ball's return meant the Hornets finally had their preseason projected starting five on the floor together for the first time this season. But that lasted a little more than three quarters as Brandon Miller sprained his left ankle with 8:20 remaining in the game on a drive to the basket and did not return.

CAVALIERS 130, NETS 101

NEW YORK (AP)—Evan Mobley scored 21 points, Caris LeVert added 19 and Cleveland rolled to a win over Brooklyn.

Donovan Mitchell had 18 points and five assists, and Georges Niang had 17 points and nine rebounds for Cleveland (23-4), which won its second straight and for the sixth time in seven games.

Cameron Johnson led Brooklyn with 22 points and five assists, and Day'Ron Sharpe had 15 points and seven rebounds. The Nets (10-16) lost their third straight and fell for the sixth time in seven games.

Kenny Atkinson returned as a head coach to Brooklyn with the Cavaliers. The 57-year-old led the Nets for four seasons.

BULLS 122, RAPTORS 121

TORONTO (AP)—Nikola Vucevic scored 24 points, Coby White added 19 and Chicago held on to beat Toronto for their fourth win in six games.

Talen Horton-Tucker scored 15 points and Ayo Dosunmu had 12 as seven Bulls players reached double figures.

Chicago's Lonzo Ball missed six of his first seven 3-point attempts before making a key shot from long distance late in the fourth.

Bulls guard Josh Giddey had to be helped off the court midway through the third quarter after rolling his right ankle while trying to defend a shot. He did not return. Giddey finished with 11 points, nine rebounds and eight assists in 24 minutes.

RJ Barrett scored 32 points and Gradey Dick had 27 as Toronto almost erased a 16-point deficit in the fourth quarter, but the short-handed Raptors lost their fifth straight.

CLIPPERS 144, JAZZ 107

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP)—The Utah Jazz were on the wrong end of a blowout as they had their losing streak extended to three by the LA Clippers on Monday.

After James Harden scored more points than the entire Jazz team in the first quarter, it was pretty clear what direction the game was heading in.

Jordan Clarkson was the leading scorer for Utah with 20 off the bench. Lauri Markkanen came in second with 17.

The Jazz will stay on the road for the next four games. The second game on the road trip will take them east to the Motor City as they take on the Pistons on Thursday.

Bucks-Thunder NBA Cup final will have a lot of money at stake

LAS VEGAS (AP)—When the Milwaukee Bucks clinched their spot in the NBA Cup championship game, plenty of the team's younger and lesser-paid players were exuberant in the locker room.

Yes, they have a chance at a trophy. Those are nice.

They'll also have a chance at their biggest payday of their careers. The NBA Cup final—the Bucks vs. the Oklahoma City Thunder—is Tuesday in Las Vegas, with an additional $308,983 in prize money going to each of the players on the winning team.

For the league's superstars, that amount might represent a game's pay—or maybe even a half-game's pay. For much of the league, it's still a colossal sum.

"I try not to think about the money," said Bucks star Giannis Antetokounmpo, who is making about $48.8 million this season. "No, it's not accurate what I'm saying. I think about the money—but I think about the money when we talk about the young guys."

Winning players Tuesday will receive $514,971 from the league's Cup prize pool if they're on standard NBA contracts. The players on the losing team Tuesday will get $205,988 apiece; players on two-way deals will get half of those figures.

At his current salary of $578,577, Thunder two-way player Ajay Mitchell would be making about $7,056 per game. He's going to do a lot better than that on Tuesday, win or lose.

"Obviously, there's a lot of money on the line," Mitchell said. "But my main focus is just on the win. It's exciting to know that there's money on the line, but the main focus is just winning another basketball game."

The NBA Cup has a prize pool to incentivize players. The teams that lost in the semifinals—Atlanta and Houston—saw their players collect $102,994 each; the teams that bowed out in the quarterfinals—New York, Orlando, Golden State and Dallas—saw their players collect $51,497 apiece.

"I might get a new watch," Knicks forward Josh Hart, who was asked what he'd do with his bonus, said in a response that went viral—and it should be noted he wasn't being entirely serious. "I don't really care about the young guys getting money. I only care about me, what I'm going to spend."

For six of the players on the Bucks and Thunder rosters—Antetokounmpo and Milwaukee teammates Damian Lillard, Khris Middleton and Brook Lopez, along with Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Isaiah Hartenstein—the difference between winning and losing Tuesday isn't even an average day at the office. Those six guys, on average, are making about $443,300 per game.

For everyone else, the trip to Vegas will be a nice bump—some nicer than others.

"Not everybody gets the same paycheck in the NBA," said Thunder forward Jalen Williams, who is making about $4.8 million this season. "We have guys that are on two-way contracts and some guys that are fighting to stay in the league. So, obviously, that money is a bigger deal for some people than others—so we definitely play for that."

Bucks reserve A.J. Green makes about $2.1 million this season. The idea of adding $500,000 to that for winning one game blew his mind.

"It is crazy," Green said. "But that shouldn't make you play any harder. It really shouldn't."

Nothing makes Bucks forward Bobby Portis play harder; he's one of the guys in the league who seems to treat every game with the same all-out vigor. He's from Little Rock, Arkansas, where the median household income is about $60,000 and it's estimated that 1 in 6 people in that city of about 200,000 are living in poverty.

It's not lost on Portis—who's making about $12.6 million this season—how lucky he is.

"It'll take guys a lifetime to make $500,000 where I'm from," Portis said. "So, I don't take any dollar amount lightly."

Green said he would give some of that bonus to his church, some of it to the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and save the rest. Mitchell plans on saving just about all of whatever comes his way from his NBA Cup experience.

Antetokounmpo's NBA contracts—past and future—add up to about $460 million, and that's just the total of his on-court deals. He fulfilled his life dream of being able to provide for his family long ago; he's built wealth that will last for generations. That said, he still says Tuesday should be significant to everyone.

"It's life-changing money," Antetokounmpo said. "Obviously, $500,000, you can put a down payment on a house. You can put the down payment on two houses. ... It's an ongoing joke we have in our locker room. We say we play for the young guys because this money will mean a lot to them. But it really means a lot to everybody—because it's a lot of money."

Bucks guard Khris Middleton misses practice with illness on eve of NBA Cup final

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Milwaukee Bucks guard Khris Middleton missed practice Monday because of illness, leaving his status for the NBA Cup final against the Oklahoma City Thunder somewhat unclear.

The Bucks and Thunder play for the Cup on Tuesday night.

Middleton has played in only four games so far this season, averaging 7.0 points, 5.8 assists and 3 rebounds in those contests. He missed the Bucks' first 21 games while recovering from offseason surgeries on each of his ankles.

The Bucks also practiced Monday without guard Damian Lillard, who irritated a calf in Saturday's semifinal win over Atlanta but finished the game.

"When I have something with my calf, sometimes I start panicking. But I knew it wasn't nothing serious. Just a little irritation," Lillard said. "I've just been doing treatment and doing all the stuff to try to get ahead of it and just get ready for tomorrow."

He left no doubt about his status for the final.

"I'm playing," Lillard said.

Middleton is a three-time All-Star who was part of Milwaukee's NBA championship and USA Basketball's run to Olympic gold at the Tokyo Games in 2021. He had six points for the Bucks in the win over Atlanta.

Crochet has numbers issue following trade to Red Sox

BOSTON (AP)—Garrett Crochet quickly realized he had a numbers issue following his trade to the Boston Red Sox.

He had worn No. 45 with the Chicago White Sox since his major league debut in 2020 and the pitcher was dealt Wednesday to a team that retired the number for Pedro Martínez in 2015.

"Yeah, that's one of the first things that I realized after the trade went through," Crochet said Friday.

His next few choices also were unavailable.

"I wore 34 in college, so that one was retired," he said, thinking back to his time at Tennessee. "Other than that, I never really picked a number since high school, and in high school I wore number 14, which I also believe was retired."

Boston retired No. 34 for David Ortiz in 2016 and No. 14 for Jim Rice in 2009.

Crochet settled on No. 35, unused this year and worn most recently with the Red Sox by Richard Bleier (2023), Eric Hosmer (2022), Matt Andriese (2021) and Josh Osich (2020). Its last multiyear user was Steven Wright from 2013-19.

Martínez is a Red Sox special assistant and works for the team as a spring training instructor.

"Having any sort of conversation with Pedro would be my ideal world," Crochet said, "but I'm kind of going in with low expectations, hoping to bump into guys when I can."

Crochet was acquired at the winter meetings for catcher Kyle Teel, infielder Chase Meidroth, right-hander Wikelman Gonzalez and outfielder Braden Montgomery.

"It's a big relief," Crochet said. "It takes a lot of stress out of the way of, I suppose, in spring training being curious where we're going to be living, the housing situation is tough to figure out, so it's nice to kind of be ahead of the game in that regard."

Crochet was 6-12 with a 3.58 ERA in 32 starts for a White Sox team that went 41-121, the most losses for any club since 1900. The 25-year-old was picked for the AL All-Star team in his first season as a starter.

"The opportunity to play for the market of Boston, the fan base that's representing the Red Sox is about as great of an opportunity as you can come by in this game," he said. "Especially growing up that's what you imagine it to be, is Major League Baseball, playing in the AL East, Boston, New York, the whole thing like that. And I grew up watching Big Papi, so it's going to be a very surreal moment to play where he played."

CHAMPS

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Owens let one fly past Matansa's goalie just six minutes in. But Matansa's Arnelio Pingol Jr. leveled the playing field, 1-1, three minutes later.

Then, Theo Joab came barreling down the pitch to put the Typhoons in the lead in the 18th minute. It was a whirlwind of goals from there as MP United's Landon Springer extended their lead in the 32nd, and Matthew Hwang scored their fourth goal in the 39th.

Matansa couldn't catch a break as the Typhoons defenses picked up any loose ends and denied entry to their keeper. However, Rhyane Umali found an opening in the 48th to cut the lead in half, 2-4.

Matansa tried to navigate through the pitch and get on board again, but time ran out and handed the championship to MP United.

The MP United team consisted of Ian Ahn, Mateo Angeles, Kaide Benson, Kimason Cabrera, Xavier Camacho, Izeah Deleon Guerrero, Matthew Hwang, Quido Jambor, Theo Joab, Yutaro Kitagawa, Eunchan Ko, Taiga Namai-Scoggins, Kanoa Owens, Landon Pudney, Landon Springer, and Minato Takahashi.

Third place went to Kanoa FC over Latte FC in a shootout, (4)1-1(2).

Latte's Napu Pangelinan scored the most goals this season with 22 to win the Golden Boot Award.

In the U14 girls division, Kanoa took home the gold in the U14 girls division over Latte FC, 3-1.

Kanoa wrapped up their dominant season of seven wins and just one loss as the girls in orange claimed the title once again.

Star striker Beatrice Gross was the difference maker and scored two goals—in the 17th and 20th, while Aubrey White opened the game up in the first minute.

Throughout the matchup, Kanoa overpowered Latte both defensively and offensively. But Latte did get a goal in for a 1-3 game. However, that was all they could do before the final whistle and Kanoa won the title again.

Kanoa included Trisha Abuan, Faith Arriola, Neveah Arriola, Cali Jade Cabrera, Samantha Escarcha, Beatrice Gross, Ye Lynn Ha, Elikristiana Iglecias, Rhiana Macalinao, Hayven Moteisou, Phynix Nogis, Quiara Sanchez, and Aubrey White.

Gross was the Golden Boot Award winner as she scored the most goals at 15 throughout the season.

Third place went to MP United as they blanked Shirley's FC, 9-0.

Results of the U17 and U12 finals will be posted in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune.*

FLAMES

From page 16

Tech just 16 seconds into Round 1.

Skylee Mesa won over Beckiy "Kameame" Ha of Trench Tech via unanimous decision.

Then, Tano Camacho Guam Muay Thai and Aiden Nekaifes fought to a split draw.

For Trench Tech's team, Enoch Pamintuan prevailed via unanimous decision against Ratu Simon.

Ram Lee then won via unanimous decision against Mark Jonota, while Phil Gregorio and Keith Aldan also won via unanimous decision over their opponents Gable De Chavez and Dee Ogo. Jimmy Tubale won by forfeit over Heartly Liwy.

For Saipan's MCAMMA/Primevil, Saips Thuy won via unanimous decision over Johnny Lee, while Gratchen Pintor also won via unanimous decision over Junene Cabe.

Rota's Brendon Manglona defeated Clarence Cabrera via referee stoppage at the end of Round 2.

Salvatore Gotti Jr. of Latte Built triumphed via unanimous decision against Kody Palacios, and so did Rickson Menchor who prevailed via verbal submission against Tyron Tumada at the end of Round 1.

Boom Taitano won via split decision over Joaquin Deleon Guerrero; Jaziah Camach won via unanimous decision against Lorenzo Reyes; and Bradley Manalo of Spike 22 won over Ethan Sanchez via forfeit.

Trench Tech's Justis "Cuki" Alvarez said of the return of the octagon that the event was a total success.

"The crowd was a little less than the first two previous events for Ring of Fire, but that's because there were so many events happening simultaneously along with Christmas parties and other functions. But there were at least 400 screaming fans in attendance cheering on all the island warriors!"

He added, "It's been six years since our last cage fight! The year 2018 was the last time we set up the octagon at the Marianas Business Plaza in Susupe. So, it was a long time coming, and the 'return of the octagon' definitely did not disappoint!"

In the future, Alvarez said they plan on having at least two Ring of Fire events in the boxing ring and one Cage of Fire fight in the octagon, as well as another Mats on Fire Grappling submission fighting tournaments. "So, we forecast a busy and fun 2025 and beyond. We will keep everyone posted on the exact dates for each event," he said.

Alvarez then said, "We want to take this time to personally thank all the fighter athletes and competitors for fighting their hearts out and entertaining all the fight fans at the Garapan Central Park Roundhouse. Of course, thank you to all the fans who supported the event and purchased their tickets."

Alvarez then gave a huge thank you to his team for their hard work behind the scenes and thanked the event's sponsors Miller Lite and Monster Energy, Hafa Adai Rent A Car, Century Hotel, and Fökai Industries.

RUGBY

From page 16

from last year. "We have to start all over pretty much. Skill wise, it goes up, and then throughout the year, it starts to go down because of the absence of veteran players," he said.

On how they could fix that, he said that they're trying to get their federation started so they could have more support, have more organized rugby leagues on island, and get more players to come out and learn the sport.

As for this year's tourney, he said, "It's always a good time when we have Guam over. It's always fun to host Guam—they're like brothers and sisters to us. They help us out a lot in terms of learning the sport and we're just trying to give back to them by hosting them." He added he that hopefully next year, they're able to fly out to Guam to compete in tournaments there.

For GRC's speedy Justin Tanguileg, he said that it's always good to come out to Saipan and compete against MRC. "They're still getting us a run for our money. It just keeps getting better and better every year," he said. "We're very happy to have them host us and take very good care of us, so we thank them for that."

MRC 1 consisted of Koji Taisakan, Oscar Setefano, Cain Castro, Jesse Olopai, Jason Limes, Matthew Reyes, Donald Pangelinan, Mamerto Forbes, Luis Claridades, Gregorio Sablan, Claude Celis, and Freddie Guerrero.

MRC 2 included Darien Quitugua, Jeffrey Quitugua Jr, Stanley Choway, Kevin Ruwaath, James Venus, Caleb Yug, Daniel Taisakan, Reed Camacho, Darren Duenas, and Andre Jones.

MRC women's team was made up of Tatiana Mettao Pangelinan, Tahira Mori Setefano, Maria Castro, Ti'ana Villanueva, Vivalyn Yangirelit, Davian Atalig, Jahsmin Ramon, Kailani Laniyo, Aiko Rasiang, and Fina Faisao.

As for Guam's teams, the men's team included Damian Carbuillido, Palikun Welly, Reiko Mendiola, Zeke Santos, Henry Mendiola, Jude Mendiola, Justin Tanguileg, Manny Cruz, Brandon Burgos, Joe Mateo, Jayton Penaflor, Ryan Paulus, Jerome Uson, Troy Fritz, Amiotonu San Nicolas, and Thomas Cruz.

Guam's women's team was made up of Cadance Mansapit, Clara Wong, Danielle Robles, Elexis Gogue, Jaevoleen Guzman, Jaeana Smoak, Jaicia Vita, Iolana Nidine Untalan, Ha'ane Taitano, Rozlyn Mendiola, Victoria Botelho, and Tori Starr.

The sponsors of the event were Federated States of Micronesia Bank, Marpac, Shirley's Catering, Monster Pizza, Coca-Cola, Pacific Rim, and Ur Tents.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	21	5	.808	–
New York	16	10	.615	5
Brooklyn	10	16	.385	11
Philadelphia	8	16	.333	12
Toronto	7	20	.259	14½
Southeast Division				
Orlando	17	11	.607	–
Miami	13	11	.542	2
Atlanta	14	13	.519	2½
Charlotte	7	19	.269	9
Washington	3	21	.125	12
Central Division				
Cleveland	23	4	.852	–
Milwaukee	14	11	.560	8
Indiana	12	15	.444	11
Chicago	12	15	.444	11
Detroit	11	16	.407	12

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Memphis	18	9	.667	–
Houston	17	9	.654	½
Dallas	17	9	.654	½
San Antonio	13	13	.500	4½
New Orleans	5	22	.185	13
Northwest Division				
Oklahoma City	20	5	.800	–
Denver	14	10	.583	5½
Minnesota	14	11	.560	6
Portland	8	18	.308	12½
Utah	5	20	.200	15
Pacific Division				
Phoenix	14	11	.560	–
Golden State	14	11	.560	–
L.A. Clippers	15	12	.556	–
L.A. Lakers	14	12	.538	½
Sacramento	13	14	.481	2

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NFL STANDINGS

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

East	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-Buffalo	11	3	0	.786	445	310
Miami	6	8	0	.429	276	312
e-N.Y. Jets	4	10	0	.286	283	325
e-New England	3	11	0	.214	238	337
South						
y-Houston	9	5	0	.643	328	300
Indianapolis	6	8	0	.429	280	329
e-Jacksonville	3	11	0	.214	263	377
e-Tennessee	3	11	0	.214	254	379
North						
x-Pittsburgh	10	4	0	.714	336	265
Baltimore	9	5	0	.643	418	332
Cincinnati	6	8	0	.429	399	387
e-Cleveland	3	11	0	.214	239	356
West						
y-Kansas City	13	1	0	.929	329	259
Denver	9	5	0	.643	336	247
L.A. Chargers	8	6	0	.571	294	247
e-Las Vegas	2	12	0	.143	245	376

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

East	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
x-Philadelphia	12	2	0	.857	369	247
Washington	9	5	0	.643	396	315
Dallas	6	8	0	.429	298	380
e-N.Y. Giants	2	12	0	.143	208	328
South						
Tampa Bay	8	6	0	.571	403	326
Atlanta	7	7	0	.500	293	342
New Orleans	5	9	0	.357	309	312
e-Carolina	3	11	0	.214	247	418
North						
x-Detroit	12	2	0	.857	459	282
x-Minnesota	12	2	0	.857	369	252
Green Bay	10	4	0	.714	379	287
e-Chicago	4	10	0	.286	266	308
West						
L.A. Rams	8	6	0	.571	310	338
Seattle	8	6	0	.571	315	313
Arizona	7	7	0	.500	314	306
San Francisco	6	8	0	.429	314	320

e-eliminated from playoffs | x-clinched playoff spot
y-clinched division

Vikings win 7th straight with blowout of reeling Bears

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Sports

Crochet has numbers issue following trade to Red Sox

PAGE 15

MP United, Kanoa are U14 champs, again

NMIFA

Champions of the U14 boys division in the TakeCare Youth Soccer League Fall 2024, MP United, pose for a group photo during the awards ceremony at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville last Saturday.

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

MP United Football Club and Kanoa FC won the championship again in their respective divisions of the TakeCare Youth Soccer League Fall 2024 at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville on Saturday.

Both teams claimed the championship of the TakeCare Youth Soccer League Spring 2024 and it was no different this season.

In the U14 boys division, MP United outplayed Matansa FC, 4-2.

The Typhoons wrought havoc on the pitch from the opening whistle as Kanoa

See CHAMPS on Page 15

Guam Rugby Club retains Marianas Cup

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

It was another epic showdown between Guam and Saipan as they went head-to-head in the 2nd Annual Marianas Rugby Cup tournament at the Oleai Sports Complex on a busy day of sports last Saturday.

After two best-of-three rugby 7s matches, the Guam Rugby Club retained their hold of the perpetual trophy for the second year in a row.

Both teams showed grit, determination, and unrelenting energy in a highly injury-inducing contact sport, but Guam's more experienced players won the cup once again.

Saipan fielded three teams from the Marianas Rugby Club—two men's teams and one women's team, while Guam had one men's team and one women's team.

GRC won two matches against GRC to win the title, and also demolished MRC 2. For the women's matches, the GRC women's team beat the MRC women's team.

LEIGH GASES

A rugby player forces his way past two defenders who try to take him down during their friendly match in the 2nd Annual Marianas Rugby Cup tournament at the Oleai Sports Complex on a busy day of sports last Saturday.

LEIGH GASES

Marianas Rugby Club 1's Cain Castro, right, pushes back against an opponent who tries to pull him off balance as he runs through the pitch during their friendly match in the 2nd Annual Marianas Rugby Cup tournament at the Oleai Sports Complex on a busy day of sports last Saturday.

MRC 1 then bested MRC 2.

After the matches and before their friendly game of rugby 10s, MRC 1 team captain Jason Limes said that it was a good day of matches.

"Lots of injuries but we're staying strong. We tried our best to get the cup back, but unfortunately we didn't do good enough to get it back. We'll try harder next year," he said. Limes himself was injured prior to the interview but still got a few seconds of play in the friendly match later.

As for improvements to MRC this year, he said that they're still on the same level

See RUGBY on Page 15

NMIFA

Champions of the U14 girls division in the TakeCare Youth Soccer League Fall 2024, Kanoa Football Club, pose for a group photo during the awards ceremony at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville last Saturday.

Flames fly as fighters return to the octagon

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

After a six-year hiatus, the return of the octagon ignited a firestorm in the CNMI, as fighters from Saipan, Rota, and Guam lit up the night with explosive action on an electrifying Saturday at the Garapan Central Park Roundhouse.

Guam fighters brought the heat as they grappled, struck, and knocked their way to multiple wins in the Cage of Fire.

Aside from Keith "Khaos" Sablan of Guam's Benavente Striking Academy winning the main event, another pupil from the team claimed victory in the semi-main event.

While the main event was decided by a unanimous decision after three full rounds, Dylan Benavente unleashed all his firepower in a single kick, knocking out Jesus Norita just six seconds into their match.

In the Guam vs. Luta super fight, another win for Benavente Striking Academy was recorded as Curt Afleje submitted Vander Myers via rear naked choke just 23 seconds into Round 1.

Then, Ethan Aflleje submitted Jadrien Camacho via rear-naked choke at 1:43 of Round 1 in the featured Guam vs. Saipan MMA fight.

For Guam Muay Thai's team, Hila'an San Nicolas claimed victory via split decision over Teipo Asep of Latte Built.

Aldric Valera then clinched a technical knockout over John Dela Cruz of Trench

See FLAMES on Page 15

LEIGH GASES

Guam's Benavente Striking Academy fighters and supporters pose for a photo with main event winner Keith "Khaos" Sablan after the Cage of Fire at the Garapan Central Park Roundhouse last Saturday.